

Isolating the Radical Right

Coalition Formation and Policy
Adaptation in Sweden

ANDERS BACKLUND

SÖDERTÖRN DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS

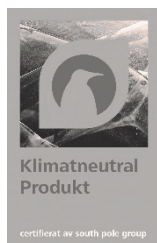
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ANDERS BACKLUND

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Abstract

In recent decades, established political parties across Europe have become increasingly challenged by a new party family: the radical right. In terms of how mainstream parties respond to this challenge, Sweden has been a puzzling case both in a comparative European perspective and in light of established theories of party competition. Rather than co-opting the restrictive immigration policies of the radical right party the Sweden Democrats, the Swedish mainstream parties jointly converged on liberal policies. In addition, rather than being included as a coalition partner or support party to the government, the Sweden Democrats have been excluded from government formation despite a pivotal position between the established left and right blocs in the parliament.

In order to explain these puzzling outcomes, this dissertation combines two bodies of scholarly literature that have tended not to communicate much: coalition theory and research on mainstream party reactions to the radical right. It uses a multi-method research design to analyse party behaviour at both the local and the national level, and in both the electoral and the parliamentary arena. In doing so, it identifies aspects of established theories and concepts in need of refinement. The dissertation argues that despite the apparently puzzling nature of the Swedish case, the isolation of the Sweden Democrats can be explained in terms of the strategic pursuit of policy, office, and votes.

The key to the strategic explanation lies in considering three things: first, that different kinds of party strategies interact, within and across arenas; second, that the choice of strategy is constrained, between different levels of a party and over time; and third, that we need to reconsider how some commonly used concepts – such as anti-pacts, winning coalitions, and policy dimensions – are operationalised. Rather than relying on the idea of qualitatively different ‘pariah’ or ‘anti-system’ parties, the findings of this thesis show how the isolation of a radical right party can be explained in terms of the strategic incentives of rival parties. The results also show that the transition from isolation to cooperation can, under certain conditions, be a rapid process. The dissertation is a contribution to research on coalition formation, spatial party competition, and mainstream party reactions to the radical right.

Keywords: radical right, mainstream parties, pariah parties, anti-system parties, cordon sanitaire, party strategy, government formation, anti-pacts, coalition theory, spatial theories of party competition, policy co-optation, policy dimensionality, Sweden Democrats, Sweden.

Sammanfattning (Summary/abstract in Swedish)

Den här avhandlingen behandlar frågan om hur etablerade politiska partier agerar när de utmanas av nya partier från den högerradikala partifamiljen. Studien fokuserar på Sverige och hur de svenska etablerade partierna har bemött det högerradikala partiet Sverigedemokraterna. Sverige har varit ett avvikande fall i jämförelse med många andra länder i Europa, där etablerade partier har tenderat både att bilda regeringar med stöd av högerradikala partier, och att ta över deras politiska positioner – framförallt i invandringsfrågan – för att försöka vinna tillbaka väljare. I Sverige valde de etablerade partierna istället (inledningsvis) att förflytta sina positioner bort från Sverigedemokraternas politik. Vidare har partiet trots sin starka position i riksdagen uteslutits från regeringssamarbete.

I syfte att förklara det svenska fallet kombinerar denna avhandling teorier om regeringsbildning med teorier om hur etablerade partier bemöter högerradikala partier. Studien kombinerar kvalitativ och kvantitativ metod för att analysera partibeteende på både lokal och nationell nivå, samt på väljararenan och den parlamentariska arenan. Genom att analysera ett avvikande fall vidareutvecklar avhandlingen etablerade teorier och koncept. Analysen visar att det svenska fallet, trots att det delvis skiljer sig från andra länder, kan förklaras i termer av hur partierna försöker uppnå tre strategiska mål: att vinna röster, att få genomslag för sin politik, och att sitta i regeringsställning.

Den strategiska förklaringen består av tre delar. För det första måste vi beakta att olika partistrategier – t.ex. valet av sakpolitiska positioner och valet att misskreditera ett annat parti – kan påverka varandra. För det andra måste vi ta hänsyn till att partier inte alltid är fria i sina val. De kan förhindras från att tillämpa en viss strategi, antingen på grund av meningsskiljaktigheter inom partiet eller på grund av att det kan vara väljarmässigt riskabelt att alltför snabbt byta strategi. För det tredje behöver vi ompröva vissa av de koncept som vanligen används inom koalitionsforskningen – t.ex. vad som gör en koalition ”vinande”, vilka politiska konfliktdimensioner som är de viktigaste, och hur vi bäst mäter förekomsten av ”anti-pakter” mellan partier.

Det strategiska perspektiv som presenteras i avhandlingen visar att isoleringen av högerradikala partier kan förklaras utan att hänvisa till att vissa partier är väsensskilda ”paria”- eller ”anti-system”-partier. Resultaten visar också att ett skifte från isolering till samarbete kan ske snabbt, givet att de strategiska förutsättningarna förändras. Avhandlingen är ett bidrag till koalitionsforskning, till forskning om partibeteende på väljararenan, samt till forskning om hur etablerade partier bemöter högerradikala partier.

Nyckelord: Sverigedemokraterna, högerradikala partier, paripartier, anti-systempartier, partistrategi, regeringsbildning, koalitionssteori.

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“Simply to assume that such-and-such a party can never go into the government [...], because this is one of the ‘rules of the game’, does not get us very far. It is assuming what we should be setting out to explain.”

Laver and Schofield (1998, p. 201)

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Abbreviations and Glossary

C	Centre Party (<i>Centerpartiet</i>)
FI	Feminist Initiative (<i>Feministiskt initiativ</i>)
KD	Christian Democrats (<i>Kristdemokraterna</i>)
L	Liberals (<i>Liberalerna</i>)
M	Moderate Party (<i>Moderaterna</i>)
MP	Green Party (<i>Miljöpartiet</i>)
S	Social Democrats (<i>Socialdemokraterna</i>)
SD	Sweden Democrats (<i>Sverigedemokraterna</i>)
V	Left Party (<i>Vänsterpartiet</i>)

Party groupings

Left bloc ('The Red-Greens'): V+MP+S

Right bloc ('The Alliance'): C+L+M+KD

Centre-left: MP+S

Centre-right: C+L+M+KD

Radical right: SD

1. Introduction

18 January 2019. The party leader of the Swedish Social Democrats, Stefan Löfven, has just been approved as prime minister by the parliament. His incumbent cabinet, which includes representatives of the Green Party, has served as a caretaker government through four painful months of coalition bargaining following the September 2018 election; now it can remain in office. The remarkable thing about this centre-left cabinet is that it faces an opposition of the centre and right with almost 60% of the seats. The problem? That majority is dependent on seats held by the radical right. Now, however, with the investiture of the Löfven II cabinet – supported by two of the centre-right parties – the radical right remains without influence over the formation of the government. Meeting the press, Prime Minister Löfven expresses concern over the growing number of European countries where mainstream parties govern with the support of the radical right. ‘Sweden’, he adds, ‘chooses a different path, and this is historic.’

The rise of the radical right constitutes one of the most profound changes in representative democracy in Europe during recent decades. By mobilising support on issues such as immigration and opposition to the European Union, the radical right has established itself as a successful new party family, affecting party competition in both electoral and parliamentary arenas. The radical ideologies of these parties have often led their rivals, at least initially, to dismiss, discredit, and stigmatise them as political ‘pariahs’ with whom cooperation is unthinkable (Downs, 2001; van Spanje & van der Brug, 2007). However, as the electoral fortunes of the radical right have waxed at the cost of mainstream parties, the latter have had to reconsider their strategies. When radical right parties become an electoral threat, mainstream parties tend to co-opt their policies in order to win back voters (Abou-Chadi & Krause, 2018; Bale et al., 2010; Han, 2015; van Spanje, 2010a; Wagner & Meyer, 2017), in what has been called a ‘contagion of the right’ (Norris, 2005). Similarly, while some radical right parties have been subjected to ‘anti-pacts’ (commitments by other parties not to cooperate with them), most radical right parties that grow large enough have been invited to become coalition partners in governments, or to serve as part of their parliamentary support base (Bale, 2003; de Lange, 2012; Twist, 2019; van Spanje, 2010b; Zaslove, 2012). Much scholarly attention has been paid to the effect of such main-

stream party reactions on the policy positions and electoral fortunes of the radical right, as well as on the policy output of governments.¹ However, research on the choice of mainstream party strategies has made slower progress (Heinze, 2018).

This is a book about the strategic choices underlying mainstream party reactions to a Swedish radical right party, the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*, SD). The SD has historically been treated as a pariah, with the other parties rejecting it as a party ‘unlike the others’, and as unfit to exert political influence. This determination to isolate the SD has been motivated by its radical immigration policies, its roots in extreme-right movements, and its alleged lack of commitment to pluralism and tolerance. The other Swedish parties have adhered to explicit anti-pacts against the SD, ruling out co-operation with it both in parliament and at all other political levels. At the local level, rather than having a polarising effect on party competition (Bale, 2003), the SD’s increased presence has been accompanied by increased cooperation between the mainstream left and right. At the national level, the SD has held enough seats since it entered parliament in 2010 to deny a majority to either established bloc of left and right. Rather than resulting in cooperation with the radical right, however, this led after the 2018 election to a split in the right bloc, as centre-left and centre-right parties turned instead to cross-bloc cooperation. In policy terms, the threat from the Sweden Democrats was not met (initially) with co-optation by the other parties; instead the latter opposed the radical right actively and collectively, by converging on liberal immigration policies. In the words of Fredrik Reinfeldt, a previous prime minister of Sweden, this reflected ‘the choice of a path that closes the door to xenophobic forces’ (*SVT Nyheter*, 2011-03-03).

In other words, Swedish mainstream party reactions to the radical right appear to differ from the empirical pattern observed across most of Western Europe.² How can we explain this anomaly? As Strøm et al. (1994, p. 317) note, ‘certain parties, as a consequence of their strong “antisystem” stance, can effectively be discounted as members of any potential government’. The idea of ‘anti-system’ parties is closely associated with the work of Giovanni Sartori (1966, 1976), for whom the presence or absence of anti-system parties

¹ For prominent examples of the former, see, e.g., Akkerman and Rooduijn (2015), Arzheimer and Carter (2006), Arzheimer (2009), Dahlström and Sundell (2012), Krause et al. (2019), van der Brug et al. (2005) and van Spanje and van der Brug (2007, 2009). For the latter, see, e.g., Akkerman (2012), Akkerman and de Lange (2012), Minkenberg (2001, 2013), Mudde (2013), Schain (2006) and Zaslove (2004a).

² Other cases of sustained isolation of the radical right include Belgium and Germany, as discussed in chapter 3.

was crucial for the classification of party systems. For Sartori, the anti-systemness of a party depends on its ideological characteristics – but in relation to the other parties in the system. As Capoccia (2002, p. 15) puts it, ‘an anti-system party will oppose some fundamental values of the regime, which, for its very salience, is shared by all other parties and constitutes a major basis for electoral competition’. As we shall see in chapter 3, the isolation of the SD has been motivated precisely by its alleged lack of commitment to certain fundamental values shared by the other parties. The Swedish case, then, appears to conform to Peter Mair’s claim that, due to the rise of ‘unacceptable’ pariah parties, the formation of coalitions on the right has become increasingly difficult (Mair, 2001, p. 114).

Does this mean that we should simply characterise the SD as an anti-system party and call it a day? There are two reasons why we should not. First, a proper explanation of the isolation of a radical right party surely requires not only a description of that party, but also an account of why mainstream parties respond the way they do. As Laver and Schofield (1998, p. 201) caution us, we must resist the temptation to transform empirical regularities – such as the systematic exclusion of certain parties from government – into behavioural constraints: ‘They are things to be explained rather than things to be used, like magic wands, to do the explaining.’ Second, the anti-system party approach cannot account for change, since ‘anti-system parties are seen as a more or less invariant feature of West European politics. Parties are either anti-system parties, or they are “normal” parties’ (de Lange, 2008, p. 33). The implications of this problem come to the fore if we consider recent developments in the Swedish case. The formation of the Löfven II cabinet, together with the dissolution of the traditional division into left and right blocs, altered the strategic parameters of coalition formation in the Swedish party system fundamentally. Before the year was up, the two mainstream parties in closest policy proximity to the Sweden Democrats (the Christian Democrats and the liberal-conservative Moderates) had announced that they were prepared to enter policy negotiations with the radical right. In December 2019, after a decade of efforts at discrediting the Sweden Democrats – efforts which had persisted well into the 2018 election campaign – the party leader of the Moderates finally referred to the SD as ‘a party like the others’ (*Dagens industri*, 2019-12-05).

This suggests that, rather than focusing on more or less invariant traits of radical right parties, we should concentrate instead on how mainstream parties respond strategically to their presence (Downs, 2012). According to Sarah de Lange (2008, 2012), government cooperation with the radical right

is not some anomaly calling for ad hoc explanations or special theories tailored to this party family (see also Twist, 2019). Instead, she argues, government formation in the presence of the radical right can be explained using standard coalition theories and the assumption that parties value policy, office, and votes (cf. Müller & Strøm, 1999). When radical right parties become electorally successful, parties on the mainstream right have a strategic incentive to co-opt their policies in order to limit voter loss. As the two groups converge, radical right parties become viable coalition partners in terms of policy; and, if they make right-wing majorities possible, mainstream-right parties may very well prefer allying with them to forming more centrist coalitions. Thus, the argument goes, radical right parties become coalition partners when the policy distance to the mainstream diminishes, and when they grow large enough to have a fundamental impact on coalition formation. Parties that are systematically excluded from government co-operation simply lack coalition potential due to size or policy positions: they are either too extreme or too inconsequential, or both. If this is true – and if it can be accurately measured – we need not invoke the idea of anti-systemness to explain the systematic exclusion of some radical right parties.

If parties are strategic and goal-oriented actors, what does it mean that the Swedish mainstream parties have chosen ‘a different path’? Does it mean that they act against their own interest? That they are motivated by principles rather than by strategy? That the isolation of the radical right is an intrinsic rather than an instrumental goal? In this book, I argue that we need invoke neither the static concept of anti-system parties nor the idea of non-instrumental, principled behaviour in order to explain the Swedish case. Instead, I too propose an explanation based on the strategic pursuit of policy, office, and votes. To arrive at this explanation, I combine two scholarly literatures that have tended not to communicate much: that on coalition theory on the one hand, and that on mainstream party reactions to the radical right on the other. Doing so leads me to analyse party behaviour in both the parliamentary and the electoral arena. Because the two are closely linked, I argue, we cannot understand the behaviour of the Swedish parties by studying either arena in isolation.

These arenas are related in two different ways, owing to the fact that when faced with electoral competition from the radical right, mainstream parties pursue both *issue-based* and *non-issue-based* strategies (van Spanje, 2018). Issue-based strategies relate to policy choices, such as whether or not to co-opt the restrictive immigration policies of the radical right in an attempt to win back voters (Meguid, 2008). Policy adaptation in the electoral arena then

has effects in the parliamentary arena, where the size and policy positions of the parties constitute the building blocks of governing coalitions. For example, the policy distance between the mainstream right and the radical right is a crucial parameter for the likelihood of the latter's being included in a coalition.

Non-issue-based strategies, for their part, concern the various other means by which mainstream parties try to limit voter loss to the radical right. One of the most significant strategies of this kind involves the formation of anti-pacts. By declaring anti-pacts against radical right parties, mainstream parties try to deprive them of legitimacy and to signal to voters that they mean to isolate them from political influence – thereby making them, potentially, a less attractive choice at the ballot box (Art, 2007; van Spanje & van der Brug, 2009). When most or all of the other parties conduct such isolation jointly, we may refer to the strategy as a *cordon sanitaire* – a commitment to the complete 'containment' of the radical right party from any political influence (Downs, 2002). As I discuss in more detail in chapter 2, I view the *cordon sanitaire* as a strategy intended for the electoral arena. Once well in place, however, it has consequences in the parliamentary arena as well. If parties have declared a commitment to isolating the radical right, the reputational costs of engaging in cooperation with it later on may be prohibitive, even if such a course is otherwise deemed strategically advantageous.

In short, a party's choice of strategy constrains its subsequent strategic choices over time and across arenas. This argument may appear self-evident, but it is not one that is routinely integrated into party research. For example, Thomas Meyer (2013) calls for more research to integrate the time dimension in order to provide a more realistic perspective on party behaviour. According to Kaare Strøm (2008, p. 537), 'the electoral connection is probably the aspect of coalition politics that scholars have most seriously neglected'. In this book, I address both of these concerns by analysing party behaviour over time and in multiple arenas. In so doing, I identify some areas where established theory needs refinement. I also find that we need to reconsider the ways in which certain common theoretical concepts are operationalised. These findings allow me to explain an apparently puzzling case using principles derived from standard theories of party behaviour. In fact, I argue, the same fundamental mechanisms of strategic behaviour can explain the reactions of the Swedish mainstream parties in various arenas and at different political levels.

I conclude that, although the Swedish experience differs in important ways from other cases of mainstream party reactions to the radical right, it

should not be considered ‘deviant’ in a theoretical sense. Despite claims of ‘a different path’, that is to say, the strategic perspective is sufficient – as long as our analytical tools are well-calibrated. The findings in this book thus support the contention that radical right parties are not qualitatively different from other parties (Mudde, 2010). Given that the SD is encumbered by a legacy of right-wing extremism – that it lacks a ‘reputational shield’ (Ivarsflaten, 2006) – this is a significant conclusion.

Heeding the call by Bäck and Dumont (2007) and Andeweg et al. (2011) for more case-oriented coalition research to complement cross-national quantitative studies, I make use of a multi-method research design that combines large-*n* and small-*n* analytical strategies (Goertz, 2017; Lieberman, 2005; Seawright, 2016). Stated otherwise, I engage both in statistical analysis and in process tracing of causal mechanisms. Although the focus here is on a single country, I analyse a multitude of cases at both local and national levels, and I use the analytical leverage provided by these cases to answer research questions that have theoretical relevance well beyond Sweden. In the following section, I present the research questions guiding my analysis, and I outline the nature of my contribution.

1.1. Research Questions and Contribution

The empirical analysis in this book revolves around four research questions, which address different aspects of the same topic. The reason for my choice here – to analyse both the local and the national level on the one hand, and both the electoral and the parliamentary arena on the other – lies in the complementary contribution of these different elements to explaining the isolation of the radical right in Sweden.

If mainstream parties approach radical right parties strategically and in accordance with coalition theory, this should be observable not just at the national level but at the local level as well. Several radical right parties in Europe were coalition partners at the sub-national level before they participated in national government coalitions (Mudde, 2013). Indeed, the sub-national level may serve as a ‘testing ground’ for new and innovative coalitions that then travel to the national level (Downs, 1998; Kropp, 2010; Wilson, 2009). Studies of the local level also have one significant advantage over (cross-)national analysis: they offer a large-*n* setting (290 municipalities in the Swedish case) with excellent unit homogeneity. This allows for a statistical assessment of how the presence of a radical right party affects patterns of coalition formation. By analysing coalition formation in Swedish

municipalities, I join the growing number of scholars who use the sub-national level to test coalition theories (Bäck, 2003a; Debus & Gross, 2016; Denters, 1985; Gravdahl, 1998; Loxbo, 2010; Olislagers & Steyvers, 2015; Serritzlew et al., 2008; Shikano & Linhart, 2010; Skjaeveland et al., 2007; Steunenbergh, 1992).

Analysing the local level requires us to consider some factors that the national level does not.³ Observing that centre-right parties were starting to include radical right parties as coalition partners or support parties, Tim Bale (2003, p. 69) argued that they had ‘removed what was essentially an artificial constraint on the size of any right bloc in parliament’. At the local level in Sweden, however, the parties have been subject to a very real constraint: the national party organisations, namely, have all formulated explicit anti-pacts that apply on all political levels. This *cordon sanitaire* has been enforced by national party leaders using the threat of sanctions. In other words, even parties that at the local level might have preferred to cooperate with the radical right have been *hierarchically constrained* from so doing. With this in mind, we can hypothesise how – given this constraint – the SD’s presence will affect coalition patterns in Sweden. This part of my analysis is aimed at answering the first research question:

RQ1: How has the SD’s presence affected patterns of coalition formation?

In keeping with Bale’s (2003) argument, my analysis of the local level is focused on the effects on bloc politics. Specifically, I look at how patterns of coalition formation change when the SD’s presence denies a majority to either the left bloc or the right bloc. If the parties have a *ceteris paribus* preference for majorities (as discussed in the next chapter), excluding the SD should make them more inclined to cooperate across bloc boundaries. However, since the radical right is in closer policy proximity to the right bloc than to the left bloc, the SD should prefer government by the former rather than the latter, even if it does not take part in such a government itself. For this reason, the right should be more likely than the left to form minority governments that rely on informal support from the Sweden Democrats.

Studying aggregate coalition patterns allows us to assess the *effect* of the Sweden Democrats on the formation of different kinds of coalitions, but it does not allow us to properly *explain* them (Andeweg et al., 2011; Bäck &

³ The implications of comparing local and national levels are discussed in greater detail in section 3.1.4.

Dumont, 2007). In an attempt to do so, therefore, I supplement my statistical analysis with an in-depth analysis of coalitions in a small number of municipalities. Using a ‘nested’ research design (Lieberman, 2005), I draw on the results from the large-n study to guide my selection of cases. I then proceed to analyse the *process* of coalition formation which underlies the effects found in the statistical analysis. Doing so allows me to assess some of the assumptions underlying my statistical model, as well as to strengthen my causal claims based on the results thereof. This part of my analysis is aimed at answering the second research question:

RQ2: How has the SD’s presence affected the process of coalition formation?

To answer this question, I develop a mechanism-based explanation of the process involved, according to which a pivotal position for the Sweden Democrats is linked to the formation of coalitions across bloc boundaries. This enables me to identify key parts of the coalition formation process in terms of the costs and benefits of different strategies, and the preferences and perceptions of the parties. A crucial part of my explanation is the distinction it involves between two different motives underlying the preference for excluding the Sweden Democrats, whereby the parties in question either (1) are unwilling to cooperate with the SD due to policy conflict, or (2) are constrained from so doing. As argued above, parties for which the SD is a viable coalition partner in terms of policy have nonetheless been prevented by their national leaders from engaging in such cooperation. The two motives correspond to two competing explanations for the formation of coalitions excluding the radical right: (1) a lack of coalition potential, and (2) the presence of (hierarchical) constraint.

Can the latter explanation be applied to coalition formation at the national level too? If we conceive of constraint in purely hierarchical terms, it would appear that the answer is ‘no’, since there is no superior political level that can sanction dissenting behaviour.⁴ I argue that we can retain the explanatory potential of constraint at the national level, but that it instead takes the form of *reputational constraint*. Rather than being sanctioned from above, parties at the national level can be sanctioned by voters if they behave in a way that appears inconsistent with their previous commitments. Hierarchical constraint and reputational constraint are thus based on different kinds of sanc-

⁴ The exception to this observation is, of course, the supranational level represented by the European Union, as discussed in section 2.4.

tions, but they are functionally equivalent in generating costs that may be high enough for the parties to refrain from pursuing what would otherwise be their preferred strategy (e.g., cooperating with the radical right). In other words, if we conceive of constraint in a more general manner, the coalition formation mechanism identified at the local level travels to the national context.

How plausible, then, is the idea of reputational constraint? Although the need for consistency in party behaviour was noted long ago by Anthony Downs (1957), it is rarely tested empirically (Meyer, 2013). I explore this question by analysing a certain puzzle at the national level. In 2010, the SD made its parliamentary debut, winning 5.7% of the vote and thereby preventing both the left and the right bloc from gaining a majority. Then, following two subsequent elections, the party retained its pivotal position between the blocs, yet it remained frozen out of any government cooperation. One plausible explanation for this exclusion is that the SD was simply too deviant in terms of policy. On the issue most often cited to justify isolating the Sweden Democrats – immigration – the party called for radically restrictive policies in a context where liberal immigration policy was the norm. Indeed, despite the electoral threat posed by the Sweden Democrats, no other party attempted to co-opt their restrictive immigration policies in order to win back voters until after the 2014 election. Instead of reacting as the ‘contagion of the right’ thesis predicts, the mainstream parties in fact collectively adopted immigration policies of an opposite kind to those favoured by the SD. This means that explaining the SD’s exclusion from government cooperation by reference to policy differences simply shifts the puzzle from the parliamentary arena to the electoral one. This puzzle underlies the third research question:

RQ3: Why did the mainstream parties in Sweden refrain from co-opting the policies of the Sweden Democrats, and instead converge on liberal immigration policies?

In answering this question, I argue that the mainstream parties formed the *cordon sanitaire* in an attempt to make the SD less attractive for voters, and that this subsequently made it costly for the parties to hold policy positions in (relative) proximity to those of the Sweden Democrats. In order to shield themselves from accusations that they were not sufficiently committed to the *cordon sanitaire*, that is, the mainstream parties had an incentive to distance themselves from the SD’s policy proposals. Then, having converged on liberal

immigration policies, they found that the potential benefits of any subsequent shift toward more restrictive policies in that area were outweighed by the costs of appearing to voters as unprincipled and opportunistic. In other words, the mainstream parties were reputationally constrained by their earlier commitments.

However, the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ in 2015 provided the parties with a legitimate reason to renounce these earlier commitments. Several of the mainstream parties then adopted immigration policies of a drastically more restrictive kind. As a result, by the 2018 election, the SD was no longer ‘unlike the others’ on this issue. Yet, despite the policy convergence between the mainstream right and the radical right, the anti-pacts against cooperating with the Sweden Democrats remained in place. As mentioned earlier, the incumbent centre-left minority headed by Stefan Löfven was able to stay in power by negotiating support from across the bloc boundary – even though the centre-right and the radical right together held a majority of seats. This sustained isolation of the SD calls into question the validity of the claim that the exclusion of radical right parties from government cooperation can be explained by a lack of coalition potential in terms of size and policy positions alone (de Lange, 2008, 2012). This observation prompts the fourth and final research question:

RQ4: Why has the SD been excluded from government cooperation despite its pivotal position?

Having established that the parties can be reputationally constrained in the electoral arena, I argue that the same constraint applies in the parliamentary arena. Accordingly, I find two explanations for the SD’s exclusion from national government coalitions to be plausible: (1) because of the party’s lack of coalition potential, and (2) because of the costs associated with discontinuing an anti-pact. To answer research question number four, I test these rival explanations on the three cases of national government formation that took place in parliaments where the SD was represented (2010, 2014, and 2018). Moreover, in order to account for variation in the outcome of these three cases, I make use of the coalition formation mechanism identified at the local level.

Summing up so far, we can say that the empirical analysis in this book is guided by four research questions that address different aspects of the same phenomenon: Swedish mainstream party reactions to the radical right. As noted earlier, the Swedish case is puzzling in a comparative European

perspective, as well as in light of established theories of party competition. Answering the four research questions above, I would argue, allows us to solve this puzzle. Of course, we should be wary of the potential of ad hoc explanations to render theories immune to falsification (Popper, 1963), and we should resist the tendency to ‘explain away anomalies one at a time’ (Bennett & Checkel, 2015, p. 19). Properly designed, however, an analysis of cases that do not fit well with existing theories can contribute to theory development (Lakatos, 1970). Here I follow the advice of Wolfgang Müller (2009, p. 238) to the effect that, ‘to be useful for coalition theory, [case studies] need to be theoretically informed and they should be explicit about their contribution towards evaluating and, perhaps, refining, theoretical claims’. Similarly, studies that focus on a single country need to establish why their findings are relevant to other political contexts (Pepinsky, 2019). Indeed, as Jens Rydgren (2005, p. 414) laments, many case studies on the emergence of the radical right have been plagued by ad hoc theorising that only applies to a single country.

While my focus here is on a number of cases derived from the Swedish context, the main goal of this study is not to explain these specific cases, but rather to generate findings capable of being generalised. I employ three broad strategies to address the concerns above. First, I situate Sweden in relation to other European cases. This implies acknowledging both similarities (e.g., bipolar party systems challenged by radical right parties) and differences (e.g., the historical origins of radical right parties). Second, my theoretical framework, described in chapter 2, is derived from general theories of party behaviour and coalition formation. This minimises the explanatory power ascribed to idiosyncratic factors, and it means my findings are couched in a theoretical language that travels across cases and contexts. In other words, my analysis is *theory-centred* rather than *case-centred*. Third, the multi-method logic I employ is not limited to a nested analysis of the local level; rather, it permeates the entire study. In particular, the concepts and measurements I use to analyse coalition formation at the Swedish national level are tailored for compatibility with future studies of a statistical and cross-national kind (cf. Ahram, 2013; Seawright, 2016).

The aim of this study is to contribute to three distinct literatures: that on mainstream party reactions to the radical right; that on coalition theory; and that on spatial theories of party competition. First, this book represents an answer to Mudde’s (2007, p. 288) call for more research on why mainstream parties choose different strategies vis-à-vis the radical right – a field which remains underdeveloped (Heinze, 2018). This book also addresses the ques-

tion of whether radical right parties are qualitatively different from other parties (Mudde, 2010); and, similarly, whether some radical right parties – such as those lacking ‘reputational shields’ (Ivarsflaten, 2006) – are qualitatively different from others (Minkenberg, 2013). By analysing party behaviour at both local and national levels, finally, I acknowledge ‘the importance of examining mainstream party responses to pariah parties at all levels of the polity’ (Downs, 2012, pp. 50–51).

Second, this study addresses the literature on coalition formation, in multiple ways. For example, I ask whether coalition theory can account for the inclusion and exclusion of radical right parties in governments (de Lange, 2008, 2012; Twist, 2019). I also assess how the analysis of coalition formation is affected by assumptions about the dimensionality of political conflict (Debus, 2009), and about the criteria according to which some cabinets are deemed to be ‘winning’ ones (Laver & Budge, 1986). Furthermore, I link the electoral and the parliamentary arena (Laver, 1997, p. 151; Strøm, 1990a), and I engage with the concept of anti-pacts, both in terms of their effect on coalition formation (Geys et al., 2006) and in terms of whether they can be viewed as a negative form of pre-electoral alliance (Martin & Stevenson, 2001). Finally, I address the problems involved in operationalising the concept of anti-pacts in binary terms (van Spanje, 2018, p. 146) and in classifying anti-system parties in a static manner (Zulianello, 2018).

Third, my findings contribute to the literature on spatial theories of party competition. By analysing party competition in terms of reputational constraint, I heed Meyer’s (2013, p. 4) call for integrating the time dimension in order to provide a more realistic perspective on party behaviour. I also address the interacting nature of issue-based and non-issue-based strategies (van Spanje, 2018; van Spanje & de Graaf, 2018), which I find to be crucial for explaining the Swedish case. In so doing, finally, I challenge some established assumptions about the motivations underlying the adoption of different mainstream party responses to the radical right (Meguid, 2008).

1.2. Overview of the Book

In chapter 2, I present the theoretical framework used in this study. I address the nature of my primary unit of analysis – the political party – and I set out some central assumptions I make about its status as a strategic and goal-oriented actor. I then provide a definition of the radical right, before turning to the question of mainstream party responses. I also distinguish between strategies in the electoral arena (issue-based and non-issue-based) and in the

parliamentary arena (in connection with coalition formation). Finally, I describe how such strategies can be subject to hierarchical and reputational constraint.

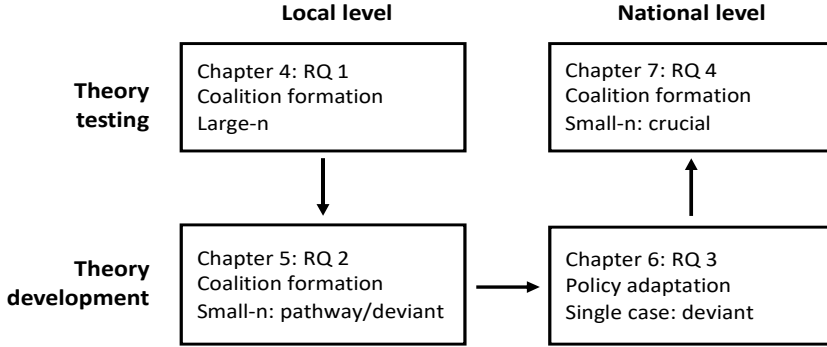


Figure 1.1. Overview of the empirical chapters

Chapter 3 deals with my research design and my methods. Here I address my choice of Sweden, and how it relates to other European cases. I provide contextual information on the Swedish party system and the Sweden Democrats, and I address the potential complexities of comparing coalition formation at the local and the national level. I then outline the multi-method approach used in this study, focusing on my complementary use of statistical analysis and of process tracing of causal mechanisms. The chapter goes on to describe the different materials used, before turning to a discussion of the limitations of this study.

Chapters 4 through 7 constitute the four empirical chapters of the book. Each relies on a distinct research design and is dedicated to one of the four research questions, as illustrated in Figure 1.1. Whereas chapters 4 and 7 are devoted mainly to theory testing, chapters 5 and 6 are largely focused on theory development, in the sense of ‘mechanism-based theorising’ (see section 3.2.2). More specifically, the former chapters aim at testing expectations derived from coalition theory, the latter at providing mechanism-based explanations that have broader theoretical implications. There is also a sequential logic to these chapters, in that each builds on those that came before, as shown in Figure 1.1. At the local level, an aggregate account precedes an in-depth study of individual cases, which are selected on the basis of the statistical results. The local level precedes the national level, because it provides a larger number of cases from which to develop a mechanism-based explanation which can then be applied to the national level. At the national

level, finally, party competition in the electoral arena determines the parameters of coalition formation in the parliamentary arena.

In chapter 4, I assess how the SD's presence affects patterns of government formation at the local level. I find that it increases the ideological diversity of governing coalitions, by making the other parties more willing to form coalitions across the left-right divide. As coalition theory predicts, there are differences between the blocs in this regard: while the left is more dependent on negotiating cross-bloc support in order to win crucial votes (as on the budget), the right is more likely to form minority cabinets that rely on informal support from the radical right.

Drawing on these statistical results, I examine a number of cases in greater depth in chapter 5. Based on these case studies, I develop a mechanism-based explanation that connects a pivotal position for the Sweden Democrats with the formation of cross-bloc coalitions. This explanation is in line with the predictions made by standard coalition theory: when the SD has a pivotal position, the other parties tend to form cross-bloc coalitions because cooperation with the SD is ruled out due to policy conflict, and because of the costs associated with governing in minority. I also find that coalition outcomes at the local level are affected by hierarchical constraint, whereby the national party leadership prevents cooperation with the radical right.

In chapter 6, I show that while at the national level the parties cannot be hierarchically constrained, they labour under a functionally equivalent constraint: their strategic choices are constrained by the reputational costs incurred by the pursuit of inconsistent strategies. To make this argument, I analyse the Swedish mainstream parties' unexpected convergence on liberal immigration policies when faced with electoral competition from the Sweden Democrats. I argue that the mainstream parties formed the *cordon sanitaire* in an attempt to make the SD less attractive to voters, and that this made it costly for the parties to hold policy positions similar to those of the Sweden Democrats. In other words, the parties were reputationally constrained in their choice of policy positions by their commitment to the *cordon sanitaire*.

In chapter 7, I test whether or not reputational constraint is required to explain the SD's exclusion from government coalitions at the national level. I find that the commitment to isolation made it costly for some of the mainstream parties to moderate their anti-pacts against the SD, even when they otherwise perceived such a move as strategically advantageous. Nevertheless, I find that the exclusion of the Sweden Democrats from government cooperation can be explained by a lack of coalition potential in

terms of size and policy positions. In chapter 8, finally, I summarise my conclusions, and I discuss their implications for future research.

2. Theory and Concepts

This book is about the ways in which political parties pursue different strategies when challenged by a radical right party in the electoral or in the parliamentary arena. Before engaging in an analysis of this phenomenon, however, we need to establish a number of important assumptions, concepts, and theoretical premises. In this chapter, I start by addressing the behavioural assumption of ‘*thinly*’ *rational actors*. I then discuss parties’ capacity for strategic action, and I ask whether they should be considered *unitary* or *collective actors*. I also distinguish between three different goals that parties pursue: *policy*, *office*, and *votes*.

I then turn to a definition of *radical right parties*, and the ways in which mainstream parties respond strategically to their presence. I distinguish between mainstream party responses in the *electoral arena* and in the *parliamentary arena*. In the electoral arena, I make a distinction between *issue-based strategies* (policy adaptation) and *non-issue-based strategies* (e.g., anti-pacts) intended to reduce competition from the radical right. In the parliamentary arena, I describe how parties act strategically in terms of *coalition formation*. Finally, I identify two types of constraint on the choice of party strategy: *hierarchical constraint*, where the choice of strategy is influenced by a hierarchical authority; and *reputational constraint*, where the choice of strategy is influenced by an actor’s earlier commitments.

2.1. Political Parties

2.1.1. The rationality of political actors

An analytical perspective focusing on strategic action requires the assumption that the actors involved are in some sense ‘rational’. Rational choice theory (RCT) has been highly influential as a tool for understanding human action and social phenomena; however, it has also received much criticism (for a prominent example, see Green & Shapiro, 1994). Most notably, RCT has come under attack due to its demanding assumptions about human motivations and capabilities. Put briefly, canonically rational actors are assumed to have perfect information, infinite computing capabilities, and fully ordered preferences, by means of which they calculate the expected utility of all decisions. Following Friedman (1953), some scholars in the RCT tradition

argue that these assumptions need not be realistic as long as the theory can produce useful *predictions*: i.e., we proceed ‘as if’ the assumptions were true. According to Jon Elster (2015, p. 18), however, the ‘as if’ clause renders RCT incapable of providing meaningful *explanations*.

Another approach is to view such rational behaviour as a subset of behaviour in general. In this vein, George Tsebelis (1990, p. 32) argues that ‘rational choice is a better approach to situations in which the actors’ identity and goals are established and the rules of the interaction are precise and known to the interacting agents’. Similarly, Satz and Ferejohn (1994) contend that rational choice theory is most powerful in contexts where choice is limited; Shepsle (2006, pp. 23–24) argues that constraining structures ‘provide scripts for political processes’; and Bengtsson and Hertting (2014) point to the logic of the situation as crucial for rationalist explanations. Browne (1971, p. 405) makes a related argument about coalition formation specifically, stating that

a case can be made that the context of governing coalitions provides a situation that at least minimizes the problem of perfect information. Here, all players have prior knowledge both of the decision point (how many parliamentary votes are needed for investiture) and of the distribution of resources (votes/seats) among the players. Hence, if players are motivated to form minimal winning coalitions, they will be able in their bargaining to know in advance which combinations will produce them.

Such a situation contrasts with that found in the electoral arena, where reliable information about voter preferences is less readily available (Budge, 1994). It is therefore difficult for a vote-seeking party to know how voters will react to a change in policy. Given the less structured environment, strategic action in the electoral arena is thus characterised by greater uncertainty.

When making decisions about which actions to pursue, actors need to weigh the relative costs and benefits of different strategies. While the idea of such ‘cost-benefit calculations’ may seem overly technical, as well as far from realistic as a description of how real actors behave, the assumptions I make here are quite modest. Actors have goals they want to achieve, and they have beliefs about how certain strategies will help them achieve these goals relative to other strategies. These beliefs are affected by information in the environment – regarding, for example, the actions and statements of other actors (voters, rival parties, etc.). A cost-benefit calculation in this context implies

nothing more than that, in the subjective view of the actors in question, a given strategy is superior to another for reaching their goals.

I thus view parties as intentional actors that are rational in a ‘thin’ sense (cf. Elster, 1983), and I assume only that they ‘largely behave in ways that *they see as productive* for achieving their goals or preferences’ (Bengtsson & Hertting, 2014, p. 717). Such modest assumptions are still enough to identify certain behaviours as puzzling. For example, if parties prefer winning more votes to winning fewer, being unresponsive to voter demands would not seem to be a productive strategy (cf. research question 3). I acknowledge that most actions in complex settings have unexpected or unintended consequences. This means that actors can make mistakes, but also that they can learn. It also means that I am more interested in intentions than in outcomes for explaining behaviour. If a given behaviour brings an outcome beneficial to certain actors, we cannot – without establishing intentionality – infer that this necessarily explains their behaviour. Doing so would imply that actors are moved by motivations unknown to themselves – a view that Elster (1985) describes as a feature of ‘rational choice functionalism’ (see also Sánchez-Cuenca, 2008).

2.1.2. Unitary or collective actors?

The primary unit of analysis in this study is the political party. Since parties are made up of a number of individuals, they are clearly not individuals themselves; rather, they are *collective actors*. Nevertheless, I often refer in this study to parties as if they were in fact individuals, most notably in the sense that they ‘perform actions’. Take two examples: ‘the Centre Party wants to deprive the Sweden Democrats of political influence’ (chapter 7); and: ‘the Social Democratic Party has changed its policies on labour migration’ (chapter 6). However, if we wish to characterise aggregates as purposeful actors, then we cannot, as Thelen (1999, p. 378) reminds us, ‘be content to impute coherence to actors identified by the analyst; we must do the empirical work to make sure that the actors to whom we attribute certain strategic behaviors are in fact players in the first place’.

According to Scharpf (1997, pp. 58–59), the capacity of collective actors for strategic action depends on their degree of internally shared perceptions and preferences, and on their capacity for conflict resolution. Political parties would appear, in general, to perform well on both counts. First, we expect the individuals who make them up to have a reasonably high degree of shared perceptions and preferences, due to ideological self-selection and the parties’ nomination processes (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2011). Second, parties have

institutionalised mechanisms for conflict resolution, ranging from autocratic control by party leaders to democratic methods of decision-making, such as majority voting (Laver & Shepsle, 1999; Teorell, 1998).

When analysing collective actors, we may adopt any position between two extremes. At the one end, we only acknowledge individuals within the collective. For an analysis involving parliamentary voting behaviour (such as coalition formation), this means considering each individual member of parliament as an actor in his/her own right. This is clearly a daunting task, and while there may be research designs where such an approach is suitable, I would argue that the present one clearly is not one of them. At the other extreme, we regard the collective as an entity on its own. This position is most radically expressed, perhaps, in Wendt's (1999, p. 215) claim that 'states are people too'. Less radical is Laver and Schofield's (1998, p. 26) oft-cited argument that, 'while no party is a unitary actor in the strict sense, many parties can be treated as if they were unitary actors for coalitional purposes'.

Many studies of coalition formation depend on the unitary actor assumption for pragmatic reasons. First, they often deal with a large number of cases, which makes assessing intra-party conflict difficult (see, however, Bäck, 2008; Giannetti & Benoit, 2008; Meyer, 2012; Pedersen, 2010). Second, such studies tend to rely on measurements of parties' policy positions (e.g., from expert surveys or manifesto data), which means that they portray parties as unitary actors that hold a single policy position on any given issue at any given time. The parts of the present study that share these characteristics (primarily the statistical analysis in chapter 4) face the same limitations. As I discuss in more detail in section 2.4, however, I acknowledge that decision-making at the local level is constrained by the dictates of national party leaders.

Furthermore, the analytical upside of studying (1) a single country and (2) a small number of cases should not be wasted, since doing so enables us to assess the validity of the unitary actor assumption more closely. Swedish MPs tend to be highly loyal to their parties (Jensen, 2000), and voting discipline in Sweden is very strong (Hagevi, 2000; Strøm & Bergman, 1992). In this case, therefore, the unitary actor assumption is more justifiable for purposes of analysing coalition formation (Laver & Schofield, 1998, p. 23). Individual MPs have an incentive to abide by the party line, because to do otherwise would jeopardise their prospects for re-election and their opportunities for promotion (Damgaard, 1995). Moreover, where parliamentary votes are a matter of public record, as they are in Sweden, the monitoring of party discipline is greatly facilitated (Saalfeld, 1995). Nevertheless, even if parties

behave as unitary actors when a parliamentary vote is held, this does not necessarily mean that they are free from internal conflict (Strøm, 1994).

An empirical example related to the present study may be helpful here. Following the Swedish election of 2018, the Liberal parliamentary party group was strongly divided on whether or not to support the Löfven II cabinet. The question was debated within the party and decided by majority vote, in favour of support. In the subsequent investiture vote, all individual MPs voted in favour. On the other hand, while the party leader was initially open to the idea that the Liberals would join the government rather than support it from outside, he later judged the party majority in favour of this strategy to be so slim as to merit ruling the option out, in order to avoid intra-party conflict (Omni, 2019-07-03; Teorell et al. 2020, p. 117). In other words, the heterogeneity of preferences eliminated certain options from the choice set; once the party had decided among the remaining options, however, it acted as a unit. As Tsebelis (1990) points out, actors may be involved in ‘nested games’ in multiple arenas (such as *between* parties and *within* parties). By taking competing factions within parties into account, we can make sense of decisions that would otherwise appear puzzling. In the end, however, a party must make one decision rather than another, even if it be the result of internal conflict and compromise. When parties ‘perform actions’, we should understand it in this sense.

2.1.3. Party goals

What, then, do parties want? In this book, I follow Strøm (1990b; Strøm & Müller, 1999) in distinguishing three party goals: *policy*, *office*, and *votes*. First, policy-seeking parties are of course interested in policy; however, this goal comes in two different flavours: policy influence and policy purity. For parties that seek policy influence, the goal is to affect policy output in such a way as to bring it as close as possible to its own ideal policy. Parties that are policy-seeking in this sense will be open to compromise, and will vote in favour of policy packages that deviate from their own programme as long as they expect the alternative output to deviate even more. Parties that are interested in policy purity, by contrast, are unwilling to compromise in this way, and will only support policies consistent with their own programme. Stated otherwise, they are ‘parties that seem to exist in order to defend certain principles, regardless of policy outcomes’ (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2004, p. 330). In reality, most parties will combine the two policy sub-goals in such a way as to stay open to some degree of compromise as long as their policy ideals are not strained too much. According to Warwick (2000; 2005), parties have

‘policy horizons’ beyond which ideological compromise is not possible (the nature of this trade-off being an empirical question).

Second, stating that parties are office-seeking means that they want to partake of the benefits of holding executive office – they want the power and prestige that comes with being in government. An office-seeking party will do all it can to enter government and to share the benefits of office – ministerial portfolios, most notably – with as few other parties as possible. Note that both office and policy can be valued *intrinsically* (in and for themselves), as well as *instrumentally* (for their utility in achieving another goal). For example, a party may seek office in order to gain more influence over policy; and it may adopt a given policy in order to win more votes.

The third goal, however – vote-seeking – is only plausible as an instrumental goal, since the ‘pure thrill of winning’ makes little sense in this context (Strøm & Müller, 1999, p. 11). In other words, parties value votes because they translate into parliamentary seats. The latter, in turn, provide them with bargaining power, enabling them to influence policy and to take part in governing coalitions. Vote-seeking behaviour is typically more forward-looking than is the pursuit of policy and office – which allows us to assess parties’ time horizons. For example, a party may be willing to defer the benefits of both policy and office at a certain time, in the expectation that doing so will result in future electoral gains bringing even greater benefits. More generally, party goals will vary over time, and they will often conflict with each other, in the sense that a strategy suitable for pursuing one goal will make it more difficult for the party to achieve another. For example, a party that pursues office and joins a government may alienate some of its voters when it has to compromise on policy with its coalition partners. In other words, parties are likely to face difficult trade-offs in pursuing their goals.

In addition to policy, office, and votes, other party goals have been proposed in the literature, such as internal party cohesion (Sjöblom, 1968) and intra-party democracy (Harmel & Janda, 1994). As indicated by the example of the Swedish Liberal Party above, party cohesion clearly matters. In the present context, however, I view it as a reflection of the need for conflict resolution that inheres in all political parties, rather than as a party goal in its own right.

2.2. The Radical Right

In this book, I view the Sweden Democrats as *a case of a radical right party*. It is necessary, then, to define the broader class of parties to which the SD

belongs. It should be noted that, although scholars are mostly in agreement about which parties belong to the ‘radical right’ family, there is less agreement about how to label this party family (see, e.g., Arzheimer, 2019a; Fennema, 1997; Mudde, 1996). Here, I follow the definition and classification proposed by Cas Mudde (2007); however, whereas Mudde refers to this family as the ‘populist radical right’, I speak simply of the ‘radical right’.⁵ The shorter label is more convenient, and it conveys the most important characteristics of the party family. I agree with Rydgren (2018), then, that it is the radical version of right-wing politics championed by these parties – rather than their populism – which is their most defining feature. Studies that refer to the SD as a (populist) radical right party include Rydgren (2002), Mudde (2007), Art (2011), Hellström et al. (2012), Minkenberg (2013), Erlingsson et al. (2014), Jungar and Jupskås (2014), Norocel (2016) (2016), Loxbo and Bolin (2016), McDonnell and Werner (2018), and Widfeldt (2018).

While the radical right party family is admittedly a heterogeneous one (see, however, Ennsner, 2012; Jungar & Jupskås, 2014), Mudde (2007) identifies its core characteristics as *nativism*, *authoritarianism*, and *populism*. Nativism is defined as ‘an ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (“the nation”) and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state’ (Mudde, 2007, p. 22). In many European countries, this ideology involves welfare chauvinism, the protection of national values and traditions, and opposition to immigration, to Islam, and to the European Union. Authoritarianism is defined as ‘the belief in a strictly ordered society, in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely’ (Mudde, 2007, p. 23). This outlook relates most notably to questions of law and order, where radical right parties favour an uncompromising approach to combatting crime and terrorism, even at the cost of infringing upon civil liberties.

Populism, finally, is a contested concept (see, e.g., Canovan, 1981; Ionescu & Gellner, 1969; Moffitt, 2016; Muller, 2016; Panizza, 2005; Taggart, 2000). Mudde (2007) understands it as a ‘thin’ ideology that can be attached to more comprehensive ideologies, and which posits an antagonistic relationship between a ‘virtuous people’ and a corrupt and ‘politically correct’ elite (see also Canovan, 1999; Mudde, 2004; Stanley, 2008). Stated otherwise, populism represents a vision of democracy that calls for the fulfilment of the unmediated will of the people (Caramani, 2017). While parties from all families

⁵ Note that I am not alone in so doing (see, e.g., Akkerman & Rooduijn, 2015).

display populist tendencies at times, most parties accept a liberal pluralist conception of democracy: unlike the radical right, they do not view the *demos* as a homogeneous entity. Furthermore, a large part of what is commonly called ‘populism’ in the political debate may be more appropriately understood as a certain political style (cf. Moffitt & Tormey, 2014) than as an ideological characteristic.

Radical right parties are considered ‘radical’ in that they challenge some fundamental aspects of liberal democracy, most notably pluralism and the protection of minority rights. This can be contrasted with the stance taken by ‘extreme’ parties, which are openly undemocratic (Mudde, 2007, p. 25; see also Capoccia, 2002). The label ‘right’ in a conventional sense may imply both liberal economic policies and/or conservative social views.⁶ However, the radical right is right-wing primarily in the socio-cultural sense of the term (Rydgren, 2007). This means that non-economic issues such as immigration, law and order, and national sovereignty are more salient for the radical right than are economic issues. In terms of economic policy, radical right parties across Europe share a commitment to protectionism and welfare chauvinism; but their position on ‘traditional’ economic left-right issues – as in connection with state intervention – is marked by diversity and flexibility (Otjes et al., 2018; see also Rovny, 2013).

Although there has been a tendency to explain the growing electoral support for radical right parties in terms of protest voting, empirical studies have shown their supporters to be motivated primarily by policy concerns – opposition to immigration first and foremost (Ivarsflaten, 2008; Loxbo, 2014; van der Brug et al., 2000; van der Brug & Fennema, 2003). A party trait that has been shown to be important for the ability of radical right parties to attract voters is the possession of a ‘reputational shield’. According to Elisabeth Ivarsflaten (2006), anti-immigration parties that started out, for examples, as regional or agrarian parties have a historical legacy by means of which they can fend off accusations of racism and extremism. By contrast, parties which originated in movements of the extreme right lack such a reputational shield, making them more vulnerable to attempts by their political opponents to discredit them. The idea of a reputational shield has important implications for my choice of Sweden as my object of study – a point to which I return in the next chapter.

⁶ ‘Liberal’ in the common European sense – i.e., tending to favour the free market.

2.3. Strategic Responses to the Radical Right

What happens, then, when mainstream parties are threatened by the radical right? Although a number of different typologies of mainstream party reactions to the radical right have been proposed, research on the topic remains underdeveloped in terms of conceptual refinement (Heinze, 2018). One distinction commonly made is that between ‘engagement’ and ‘disengagement’ with the radical right (Downs, 2001, 2002, 2012).⁷ Engaging with a radical right party means cooperating with it and/or co-opting its policies. A strategy of disengagement entails either ignoring it or isolating it through blocking coalitions or legal restrictions (Downs, 2012). However, while it may be analytically helpful to map out these different party strategies as discrete categories, the responses are not as distinct empirically as they are in theory (Bale, 2003).

The conceptual heterogeneity that marks research on mainstream party reactions to the radical right also reflects the need to employ different analytical tools for different research problems (Heinze, 2018). In this book, I distinguish between mainstream party strategies in the electoral arena and in the parliamentary one. Strategies in the two arenas interact, but there are good reasons to keep them analytically distinct, because they serve different goals. In the electoral arena, mainstream parties are interested in reducing competition from the radical right in order to win a larger share of votes. In the parliamentary arena, they pursue policy influence and the rewards of office. In the two sections that follow, I address party strategies in each arena.

2.3.1. The electoral arena: Managing the threat of the radical right

Party competition in the electoral arena is about competing for votes, and party strategies are aimed at winning as many of these as possible. When analysing this arena, I follow Bonnie Meguid (2008) and Joost van Spanje (2018) in distinguishing between *issue-based* and *non-issue-based* strategies. Issue-based strategies concern policy. Starting with Anthony Downs’ (1957) landmark contribution, ‘spatial’ theories of party competition have made predictions about how parties will adapt their policy positions in an n-dimensional policy space in order to maximise their electoral support (see, e.g., Enelow & Hinich, 1984). While such theories tend to treat all parties as

⁷ Similarly, Widfeldt (2003) distinguishes between ‘accommodation’ and ‘marginalisation’, and Goodwin (2011) between ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ strategies (see also Bale et al., 2010; Capoccia, 2005; Minkenberg, 2001).

essentially equal, Meguid (2005, 2008) distinguishes between mainstream parties and ‘niche parties’, such as the radical right.⁸ Because these two types of parties are fundamentally different, she argues, they also have different strategies at their disposal. Mainstream parties are not limited to adapting their spatial positions in response to niche parties; they can also affect the salience of a given policy issue by either emphasising or downplaying it in the political debate.

According to Meguid, mainstream parties can choose between *dismissive*, *adversarial*, and *accommodative* strategies. A dismissive strategy involves ignoring the issues on which a niche party mobilises electoral support. In the case of radical right parties, immigration is likely to be such an issue. By dismissing the immigration issue, mainstream parties seek to reduce its salience and to deny legitimacy to the radical right party. An accommodative strategy, by contrast, entails co-opting the policies of the radical right party, by adopting positions similar to those which it takes. This increases the salience of the issue – the hope being to transfer ownership from the radical right party to the mainstream party employing the strategy. Moreover, Meguid argues, mainstream parties are in a good position to achieve such a transfer and to win back voters from the radical right party, because they have greater credibility and superior resources.⁹

Applying an adversarial strategy, finally, means adopting a position opposite to that held by the radical right party. According to Meguid, mainstream parties engage in an adversarial strategy knowing that it will increase the salience of the issue in question, thereby benefitting the radical right party. Still, they choose the strategy in the belief that the radical right party will steal voters mainly from their mainstream rivals. For example, a social democratic party may seek to boost the salience of the immigration issue, with the expectation that the resulting electoral gain for the radical right will mainly damage a conservative rival. In other words, mainstream parties may use radical right parties as a weapon for maximising their share of the vote *relative* to that won by their main rivals (Meguid, 2008, p. 33).

⁸ As Meguid (2008, pp. 3–4) defines them, niche parties reject the traditional class-based orientation of politics; they raise novel issues that often do not coincide with the traditional left-right dimension; and they prioritise a limited number of policy issues on which to compete.

⁹ Despite this claim, empirical research has shown that mainstream party attempts to co-opt the policies of the radical right may in fact benefit the latter electorally (see, e.g., Arzheimer & Carter, 2006; Dahlström & Sundell, 2012; Gruber & Bale, 2014; Krause et al., 2019; Minkenberg, 2013). If the radical right has established ownership of an issue, a transfer may not be possible. In the words of *Front National* leader Jean-Marie le Pen, voters may ‘prefer the original to the copy’ (Arzheimer, 2009, p. 264).

What, then, determines the choice between different strategies? If a radical right party poses no real electoral threat to the mainstream parties, the latter can be expected to opt for a joint dismissive strategy, since this is the least costly. On the other hand, if Mainstream Party A loses a significant number of voters to a niche party, we can expect it to pursue an accommodative strategy instead, in the hope of gaining ownership of the issue in question. Mainstream Party B, which loses fewer voters to the radical right party, will then choose an adversarial strategy in order to maximise its relative vote share, in accordance with the logic above. Finally, when mainstream parties A and B lose an equal number of votes to the radical right, they can be expected to apply a joint accommodative strategy. Note, however, that there is no scenario in Meguid's theory where a joint adversarial strategy is adopted, because a strategy of that kind 'will only serve to encourage the flight, from both parties, of voters who support the niche party's issue position' (Meguid, 2008, p. 103). Meguid does acknowledge, however, that parties face two kinds of constraint on their strategic behaviour (2008, pp. 104–107) – organisational and reputational – a point to which I return in section 2.4.

In the case of non-issue-based strategies, mainstream parties 'can verbally denigrate the niche party and its elite or forbid the establishment of electoral or formal coalitions between the parties at local, regional, national, and even supranational (e.g., EU) levels' (Meguid, 2008, p. 31). With the former approach, mainstream parties attempt to 'demonise' the radical right party, for example by labelling it as extremist (see also Saveljeff, 2011). The latter approach, in the terminology of coalition theory, involves the formation of *anti-pacts* where the parties in question commit themselves not to form a government with the radical right party (or with outside support from it). Following the same logic as the adversarial issue-based strategy, Meguid (2008, p. 31) argues that such non-issue-based strategies are intended 'to boost the niche party's support' in order to hurt a mainstream rival.

An alternative motive for entering an anti-pact, largely ignored by Meguid, is to deprive radical right parties of legitimacy and to signal to voters thereby that they are unlikely to be politically influential, in order to make them a *less* attractive choice at the ballot box (Art, 2007). Indeed, Meguid acknowledges this motive in passing when she concludes that the Rally for the Republic, a mainstream-right party in France, 'tried to reduce the popularity of the Front National' by combining policy co-optation with demonisation and a commitment to non-cooperation (Meguid, 2008, p. 182). This is the strategic combination that van Spanje (2018) calls 'parroting the

pariah' (see also van Spanje & de Graaf, 2018). According to van Spanje (2018, p. 76), such a combination is possible because issue-based and non-issue-based strategies in the electoral arena are, in principle, independent of each other. Stated otherwise, it may be possible for mainstream parties to pursue this strategic combination if they justify their commitment not to cooperate with the radical right party by reference not to its policy positions as such, but rather by reference to some other characteristic of that party, such as its alleged extremism.¹⁰

For my part, I find the view that anti-pacts are formed with an eye to hurting the radical right rather than helping it to be *a priori* more plausible. It is also consistent with more general theories about pre-electoral coalitions, whereby parties commit prior to an election to the formation of certain coalitions (the election results allowing). Such pre-electoral coalitions can serve as a signal to voters that the parties in question will be able to form an effective government coalition; or they may be aimed at dispelling uncertainty about the results of post-election bargaining (Allern & Aylott, 2009; Christiansen et al., 2014; Golder, 2006, pp. 23–29). In other words, pre-electoral coalitions are intended to increase the attractiveness of the participating parties, through signals to voters. In the same way, I expect the aim of anti-pacts to be to *reduce* the attractiveness of the isolated party, by signalling to voters that there will be no cooperation with it – so that the party, at best, will have only indirect influence over policy output (cf. van Spanje, 2018, p. 72).

In the introductory chapter, I used the term *cordon sanitaire* to refer to a situation where all or most of the other parties join together in an anti-pact against a radical right party. Unlike Downs (2001), I use *cordon sanitaire* to refer to the *commitments* made by the other parties not to cooperate with the radical right; that is, I do not mean their actual coalition behaviour, such as when they form coalitions to deprive the radical right of political influence. This distinction is important, because although the formation of a *cordon sanitaire* (or, more generally, of an anti-pact) has effects in the parliamentary arena, it is fundamentally an electoral strategy. Stated otherwise, parties do not form anti-pacts in order to constrain themselves in subsequent coalition bargaining; rather, they do so because they want to reduce the electoral appeal of the radical right. Nevertheless, once well in place, an anti-pact becomes a *de facto* constraint on coalition formation.

¹⁰ In the French case, Meguid argues that the combination was unsuccessful in part because it sent mixed signals to voters, but above all because the rival Socialist Party pursued a more intense adversarial strategy (Meguid, 2008, p. 182).

2.3.2. The parliamentary arena: Forming viable coalitions

The most important strategic decision in the parliamentary arena arguably concerns the formation of government coalitions. When radical right parties win enough votes to gain parliamentary representation, their presence by definition will affect the coalition formation equation. According to Sarah de Lange (2008, 2012), however, we need no special theory of mainstream party responses to the radical right in terms of government formation. Instead, she argues, the inclusion or exclusion of radical right parties from governing coalitions can be explained using standard theories of coalition formation. Thus, we can expect radical right parties to be included in coalitions when they fulfil two criteria: holding policy positions which make them an attractive partner; and controlling enough seats to contribute to a winning coalition. In this section, I describe the coalition theories from which these expectations are derived.

In parliamentary systems, the executive needs support from – or at least toleration by – the parliament. In most such systems, this means being able to survive a vote of confidence (or no confidence), based on a majority criterion. If, following an election, any party controls a majority of seats, it can form a single-party cabinet where it controls all of the executive positions (i.e., ministerial posts). In proportional electoral systems, however, such outcomes are rare, and parties need to build coalitions in order to form majority cabinets. In a coalition cabinet, executive positions are shared out among two or more parties.

The earliest coalition theories assumed that parties are motivated exclusively by the pursuit of office. Under this assumption, only parties that take part in a governing coalition receive any payoff (which they have to share with their coalition partners), while opposition parties get nothing. According to von Neumann and Morgenstern (1953), strategic actors will form *minimal winning* coalitions. The characteristic feature of a minimal winning coalition is that it contains enough members to control a parliamentary majority, but no more. A weakness of this theory, however, is that it often cannot make a unique prediction, since several different minimal winning coalitions may be possible. William Riker (1962) proposed a solution to this problem, arguing that only a subset of mathematically possible minimal winning coalitions will be formed: those that control the fewest excess seats, dubbed by Riker *minimum winning* coalitions. The logic behind this argument is that the parties in the coalition will not want to dilute their prize (assuming it to be proportional to the share of seats they bring to the

coalition) (cf. Gamson, 1961). Another variation on the theory was advanced by Michael Leiserson (1968), who instead predicted the formation of minimal winning coalitions that contain the smallest number of parties. The rationale behind this *bargaining proposition* theory is that, the fewer the parties that are involved in coalition bargaining, the easier it will be to reach an agreement and to form a coalition.

One of the virtues of pure office-seeking theories of coalition formation is that they are extremely parsimonious and require a minimum of information: the number of parties and their share of seats. The main drawback of such theories is that they do not fare particularly well in predicting the cabinets that are actually formed. In an early test of office-seeking theories, Browne (1970) found that, while performing better than randomly, they made correct predictions in 12 percent of cases at best. Some types of cabinet – namely those which do not meet the minimal-winning criterion – will never be predicted by office-seeking theories. Minority cabinets, for example, will not form, because the majority opposition would in that case be giving away rewards that it could claim for itself. Likewise, surplus majorities containing parties inessential for a majority will not form, because the parties taking part would then be dividing their rewards among a greater number of rivals than necessary. In what follows, I focus mainly on the implications of such theories for the formation of minority governments, since that is the most relevant scenario in a Swedish context.

Due to the problems described above, later coalition researchers acknowledged that parties may not be pure office-seekers. In one of the first attempts to add policy-seeking motivations to coalition theory, Robert Axelrod (1970) argued that parties seeking to minimise conflicts of interest will form coalitions that are ideologically ‘connected’. Such *minimal connected winning* coalitions consist of parties which are adjacent to each other along the main dimension of political conflict. According to this theory, surplus majorities are possible because they may be necessary for keeping a winning coalition connected. Another argument of Leiserson’s (1966) predicted instead the formation of *minimal range* coalitions, which are as ideologically compact as possible (although not necessarily connected). Giving even more prominence to policy-seeking motivations, Abram de Swaan (1973) argued that differing policy positions mean that some parties are strategically advantaged in terms of coalition formation. Drawing on this insight, the *median party proposition* posits that the party controlling the median legislator on the main dimension of political conflict will have a strategic advantage in coalition bargaining, since it cannot be defeated by majorities to either left or right. Indeed, in a

purely unidimensional environment, the median party is expected to be a 'policy dictator' (Laver & Schofield, 1998, p. 111).¹¹

When the opposition is divided, a party may choose to support a governing coalition of which it is not a part if this coalition is seen as the 'lesser evil' among potential governments (Budge & Keman, 1993, p. 50). This, in turn, means that we may need to revise the assumption that executive coalitions must control an absolute majority of seats to be able to form. Budge and Laver (1986) replace the majority criterion with a *viability criterion* that includes no absolute size requirement, instead requiring only that the coalition can survive a vote of confidence (or no confidence). Drawing on this argument, Laver and Schofield (1998, p. 81) conclude the following:

If policy is important, it becomes necessary for a coalition of 'out' parties to be able to agree upon a policy package that is preferred by more legislators than the policy package of the government. This enables governments to divide the opposition by putting forward policy packages at the 'centre' of the policy space, making it impossible for the opposition to agree on an alternative and thereby allowing the government to manage with much less than a majority.

Policy-seeking behaviour can thus explain why a majority opposition may support or tolerate a minority government (see also Laver and Shepsle, 1996, pp. 262–263). Vote-seeking motivations suggest an additional explanation: since parties that have been in government typically pay a price at election time (the *incumbency effect*), the costs of joining a governing coalition may very well exceed the benefits (Strøm, 1984, 1990a). Instead, parties may prefer to support the government from the outside. Such support can range from formal agreements to 'shifting majorities', where the government negotiates new legislative coalitions to reach a majority on an issue-by-issue basis. Bale and Bergman (2006, p. 422) use the term 'contract parliamentarism' to refer to situations where minority cabinets 'have relationships with their "support" parties that are so institutionalized that they come close to being majority governments'. In sum, some minority governments may effectively be majority governments 'in disguise' (Daalder, 1971, p. 288; Sjölin, 1993, p. 84; Strøm, 1990a, pp. 19–21).

¹¹ Laver and Shepsle (1996) have developed a model of coalition formation which (among other things) generalises this idea to an n-dimensional environment – although it relies on controversial assumptions (Dunleavy & Bastow, 2001; Warwick, 1999).

Finally, coalition researchers have identified a number of constraints affecting the government formation process (for an overview, see Strøm et al., 1994). For example, government formation is constrained by formal constitutional rules that determine how many votes are required for a cabinet to be a winning one. Under ‘negative parliamentarism’ (as in Sweden), the executive only needs to be tolerated – rather than actively supported – by an absolute majority, making minority government more likely (Bergman, 1993). By their very nature, such formal constraints tend mainly to vary *between* countries. As I discuss in the next chapter, however, they can also vary between national and sub-national levels of the same country. Parties also face more informal constraints, such as those they themselves impose by making pre-electoral commitments, as discussed in the previous section. Again, such commitments can also be formulated in the negative, as anti-pacts (Debus, 2009; Geys et al., 2006; Martin & Stevenson, 2001).

In line with the claim that standard coalition theory can explain the inclusion or exclusion of radical right parties, Sarah de Lange (2008, p. 221) argues that mainstream parties are not in fact constrained from cooperating with the radical right by the presence of anti-pacts. Rather, mainstream parties form anti-pacts against radical right parties that do not qualify as potential coalition partners, due to their size and/or policy positions. This is consistent with the argument that anti-pacts (or, more generally, pre-electoral commitments) constitute an electoral rather than a parliamentary strategy. However, if the strategic incentives in the parliamentary arena change – if, for example, the radical right becomes crucial for securing a majority for a centre-right government – then mainstream parties may find themselves in a situation where cooperation with the radical right has become an attractive option. At that point, we must consider the possibility that, once an anti-pact has been put in place, it may be costly for the mainstream parties to remove it. In this way, then, the choice of electoral strategy introduces a constraint on subsequent coalition formation. I address this idea in more detail in the next section.

2.4. Constraints on Party Strategy

Thus far, we have seen how parties pursue strategies in the electoral and parliamentary arenas. The parties may not always be able, however, to pursue their preferred strategies, due to the presence of constraints of one kind or another. It bears noting that, for a constraint to be causally effective, there must be a motivation to violate it (Goertz, 2017, pp. 37–39). For example, if

a party has no intention of cooperating with the radical right, then the absence of such cooperation cannot be attributed to any constraint.

In this section, I define two types of constraint: hierarchical and reputational. To do so, I draw on the rational choice institutionalist literature. While there are other varieties of institutionalism, the literature in the rational choice tradition remains the most compatible with the behavioural assumptions on which I rely here.¹² I view institutions as ‘the humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction’ (North, 1991, p. 97; 1990). These formal and informal ‘rules of the game’ do not explain outcomes in themselves; rather, they constrain the behaviour of purposeful actors by affecting the costs associated with pursuing different outcomes. In other words, strategic action is still at the heart of the analysis. Constraints matter most when they are backed up by credible enforcement mechanisms (Strøm et al., 1994). For the two types of constraint defined below, the enforcement takes the form of sanctions. When an actor is constrained in this way, we can expect behaviour which violates the established rules to occur only when the expected benefits of so doing outweigh the expected costs of the sanctions (Knight, 1992; Lindner, 2003).

Institutions work on multiple levels. For example, organisations provide institutional rules for the individuals who act within them; however, the organisations can also be considered actors in their own right within a broader institutional setting (Hodgson, 2015). In the context of this study, this means that individual politicians are institutionally constrained by their party organisations, and that these organisations themselves are constrained by such features as the formal institutions of the parliamentary arena (e.g., investiture rules). Within a party, a dissenting individual, faction, or sub-national branch may be deterred from acting on its preferences by the threat of sanctions from the party leadership. This has important implications for the multi-level context studied here, where the preferences of national and of local party organisations may differ. For example, party representatives at the local level may wish to cooperate with the Sweden Democrats, yet refrain from so doing for fear of being punished by party leaders if they do not

¹² Two other forms of institutionalism are commonly identified (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Koelble, 1995): historical institutionalism, which focuses on how institutions are embedded in temporal processes over long periods of time (Steinmo et al., 1992; Thelen, 1999); and sociological institutionalism, according to which behaviour is influenced by the ‘logic of appropriateness’ that comes with occupying certain roles (March & Olsen, 1984). Other sub-types have been suggested that are distinct from these three main ones, such as discursive institutionalism (e.g., Schmidt, 2008). Due to their shared focus on ideas, however, Koning (2016) places both discursive and sociological institutionalism under the heading of ideational institutionalism.

comply with the *cordon sanitaire*. In this context, the costs of non-compliance include damage to the reputation or career opportunities of the politicians involved. Because of these costs, what was initially the preferred strategy (cooperation with the SD) ceases to be an acceptable course of action (cf. Knight, 1992, ch. 3). Stated otherwise, '[h]ierarchical authority creates a capacity to override the preferences of other actors' (Scharpf, 1997, p. 172). When party leaders constrain would-be dissenters in this way, we have *hierarchical constraint*.

Note that hierarchical constraint is different from 'organisational' constraint as defined by Meguid (2008, pp. 104–106). When parties are organisationally constrained, they fail to act strategically because of elite factionalism and/or low levels of leadership autonomy. Due to these factors, they are unable to settle on an appropriate choice of strategy, or they fail to implement such a strategy in a timely manner. Hierarchical constraint, by contrast, concerns neither a failure to choose a strategy nor an inability to implement it; rather, it refers to a situation where the preferred strategy ceases to be desirable due to the threat of sanctions. Stated otherwise, organisational constraint refers to a failure to *act as* a unitary actor; hierarchical constraint affects the preference ordering *of* a unitary actor. Organisational constraint is thus included within my definition of political parties.¹³

Hierarchical constraint, as defined here, has analytical relevance mainly for the relationship between local and national levels. Even if parties at the local level are capable of strategic action to such an extent that they may be considered unitary actors, their preferences can be constrained by the national party leadership. For parties at the national level, by contrast, there is no superior authority that can impose sanctions. The exception here, of course, is the supranational level of the European Union. Within the EU, sanctions can be imposed on member states found to be in 'serious and persistent breach' of the values of freedom, democracy, equality, human dignity, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. However, while this constraint applies to the policies that national governments put in place, it is less applicable to the actual act of government formation.¹⁴ In this book,

¹³ Recall that a party's capacity for strategic action depends on its degree of internal cohesion and its ability to resolve conflicts, as described in section 2.1.2.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Sadursky (2010). The procedure for suspending rights is covered in Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union. Although the formation of an Austrian government coalition in 2000 which included the radical right Freedom Party of Austria was 'perceived as a threat to common European values', it was also clear that the formation of the governing coalition as such did not constitute a breach of these values (de Witte & Toggenburg, 2004, p. 74). Following the formation of this govern-

therefore, I assume the threat of supranational sanctions will have but a negligible effect on coalition formation at the national level.

However, even if parties at the national level are autonomous in this sense, they can still be constrained. For example, once parties have committed to a certain strategy in either the electoral or the parliamentary arena, there are costs associated with changing this strategy. Here, the constraint arises from the threat of another kind of sanction: if parties appear to be acting in an inconsistent or unprincipled manner, they may be punished by voters. As Downs (1957) argued, parties in the electoral arena need to act relatively consistently over time in order to appear credible and trustworthy to voters; they need to be ‘responsible’ in order to protect their reputation (cf. Meguid, 2008, pp. 35–36). In the words of Adams (2012, pp. 403–404), rapid policy changes could have the following effect:

[V]oters may discount the party’s new policy promises as being motivated by political opportunism or pandering, inferences that may damage the party’s electoral appeal; certainly the charge of being a flip-flopper is one that rival politicians are likely to lodge against parties that dramatically change their policy positions, and to the extent that voters take parties’ announced policy changes as evidence that the party’s elites are opportunistic or lack core convictions, this may hamper the party’s efforts to secure electoral support.

When it comes to value-based issues in particular, Tavits (2007, p. 154) argues, policy shifts may ‘not only alienate existing supporters who may feel betrayed by such shifts, but are also likely to repel potential new voters because of the undermined credibility of the party’. Having based a strategy on appeals to certain norms, then, an actor cannot behave in ways that appear to violate those norms without thereby incurring costs (Schimmelfennig, 2000). This is not to say that such behaviour is norm-driven; it does mean, however, that a strategic appeal to norms serves to constrain future behaviour.¹⁵

The need for consistency applies as well in the parliamentary arena, where the formation of coalitions that violate pre-electoral commitments can put the credibility of a party or the reputation of its leader on the line (Debus &

ment, 14 of the EU’s member states chose to impose bilateral sanctions against Austria; however, this took place outside the EU’s legal framework (Merlingen et al., 2001).

¹⁵ The strategic perspective on which I rely here assumes that actors follow a behavioural logic of consequences: i.e., that they act instrumentally. Norm-driven behaviour, in its purest form, is instead non-consequentialist (Elster, 1989; Knight, 1992, pp. 14–16).

Müller, 2013; Golder, 2006; Strøm et al., 1994). For example, if a party has committed to not cooperating with the radical right, it is likely to be punished by voters if it later decides to do so (van Spanje, 2018, p. 38).¹⁶ Indeed, behaviour of this kind may result in the loss even of some voters who would have preferred such cooperation in the first place, but who disapprove of the unprincipled behaviour displayed. These voters may instead mark their ballot for the radical right party, now that its prospects for influencing policy have improved. Because of these costs, a party that would otherwise have preferred to initiate cooperation with a previously isolated party may refrain from doing so. Here, as in the case of hierarchical constraint, the threat of sanctions affects the preference ordering of strategies. When a political party is constrained by its earlier commitments in this way, whether in the electoral or in the parliamentary arena, we have (using Meguid's terminology) *reputational constraint*.

Due to the costs associated with violating reputational constraints, we can expect parties to do so only when their cost-benefit calculation has in some way been significantly altered. Stated otherwise, some stimulus is required to disrupt the enforcement of the constraint. According to Harmel and Janda (1994), changes in party strategy come about through either a change in party leader, a change of dominant faction, or an external shock like a heavy electoral defeat or other critical event. Harmel and Janda proceed from an organisational perspective, arguing that parties are inherently conservative organisations in which change does not 'just happen' (see also Harmel & Tan, 2003; Janda, 1990; Panebianco, 1988). Here, I draw on the factors identified by Harmel and Janda (1994), but I focus instead on how these relate to the costs of changing strategy. For example, an electoral defeat is likely to reduce the expected utility of the present strategy relative to an alternative one. It may also shift power to a new party faction with a different perception of the relative costs. Other critical events, such as an economic crisis, may also provide parties with a legitimate reason for introducing rapid and substantial changes that go against their earlier commitments. Finally, replacing a party leader associated with such commitments may grant the party freedom to pursue new strategies without being punished by voters.

¹⁶ As Steinert and Yordanova (2016) argue, the violation of an anti-pact may also damage a party's reputation in the eyes of other parties, potentially making it a less likely coalition partner subsequently (cf. Tavits, 2008).

2.5. Summary of the Theoretical Framework

In this book, I view political parties as strategic actors which are interested in policy, office, and votes. They are rational in a ‘thin’ sense: i.e., they pursue strategies they believe are helpful for achieving their goals. When mainstream parties are challenged by radical right parties, they engage in strategic responses in both the electoral and the parliamentary arena. In the electoral arena, mainstream parties can make use of both issue-based strategies (policy adaptation) and non-issue-based strategies (e.g., anti-pacts) in order to counter the threat of the radical right. They pursue such strategies for vote-seeking reasons; and, once they have committed to a certain strategy, there are vote-seeking costs incurred with changing it. In the parliamentary arena, mainstream parties choose to cooperate with the radical right when the latter is in a position to contribute to coalitions that are both winning and cohesive in terms of policy. Parties at the sub-national level, however, may be hierarchically constrained by their national party leadership from doing so. Furthermore, parties can be reputationally constrained by earlier commitments to non-cooperation; thus, a radical right party may acquire coalition potential and still remain excluded. If parties are thus constrained, a change in strategy will only come about if the costs associated with violating the constraints are significantly reduced.

3. Research Design and Methods

This chapter is dedicated to matters of research design and methods. Because the four empirical chapters in this book have quite different research designs, these are described in detail in each respective chapter. Here, I focus instead on more general aspects that are relevant for the book as a whole. In the first part of the chapter, I justify my choice of Sweden as a case of mainstream party reactions to the radical right, placing it in a broader European context. I then describe the Swedish party system and provide a brief description of the history of the Sweden Democrats. Finally, I address the implications of comparing coalition formation at the local and the national level. In the second part, I discuss the multi-method nature of this study, focusing on the complementary use of large-*n* statistical analysis and small-*n* process tracing of causal mechanisms. In the third part, I describe the different types of material used in the book. In the fourth and last part, finally, I address the limitations of the study.

3.1. Why Sweden?

Radical right parties have parliamentary representation in many countries across Europe. Why, then, the focus here on a single country, and why Sweden? There are two reasons for this. First, as argued in the introductory chapter, Sweden has been an outlier in the European context, and a puzzling case in terms of established theories of party behaviour. Second, as I argue below, Sweden constitutes one of the strongest instances of political isolation of a radical right party in Western Europe. In the following, I present a brief survey of comparable cases. I limit the survey to Western Europe, because in Central and Eastern Europe '[n]ationalism is not confined to the far right sector of the political spectrum but constitutes part of the mainstream itself. In consequence, there is neither a rationale nor a practice of a *cordon sanitaire* against the radical right by the mainstream right' (Minkenberg, 2013, pp. 14–15).

As indicated by the 'contagion of the right' thesis, joint opposition to a radical right party in the electoral arena is a rare thing. Indeed, analysing data pre-dating the electoral breakthrough of the Sweden Democrats, Meguid (2008) identified only one West European case where mainstream parties jointly opposed a radical right party in terms of policy positions – that party

being the Austrian Freedom Party under the leadership of Jörg Haider (before its eventual inclusion in the government as a coalition partner in 2000). With more recent data in hand, we can add Sweden to this list, since the Swedish mainstream parties converged on policy positions opposite to those of the Sweden Democrats (as shown in detail in chapter 6).

Turning to the parliamentary arena, we find that the systematic isolation of a radical right party by all or most other parties through a *cordon sanitaire* is, in fact, also quite a rare thing. Some radical right parties have been excluded from government cooperation for a time but without being subject to a *cordon sanitaire*. Often these parties are included as coalition partners or support parties when the mainstream right cannot form majorities without them. Such cases include the Danish People's Party, the Norwegian Progress Party, Italy's Northern League, and the Freedom Party in Austria and in the Netherlands (de Lange, 2012; Zaslove, 2012; Twist, 2019). Van Spanje and van der Brug (2007) identify five radical right parties that have faced systematic boycott by the mainstream in Western Europe: the Flemish Bloc/Interest and the Walloon National Front in Belgium, the Republicans in Germany, the Dutch Centre Democrats, and the French National Front.¹⁷ Akkerman and Rooduijn (2015) add the British National Party to the list, while excluding the Sweden Democrats (but only due to limitations of data – i.e., an insufficient number of election manifestos).

Some of the parties above have remained electorally marginal, meaning that their exclusion from coalition formation has not been particularly costly. Since under such circumstances the *cordon sanitaire* is never really put to the test, these cases are of less theoretical interest. The Walloon National Front, the Republicans, and the Centre Democrats have won between zero and two percent of the seats in their respective national assemblies. Two parties – the French National Rally (previously National Front) and the British National Party – have instead been irrelevant for coalition formation due to the disproportionality of the French and British electoral systems.

By contrast, Belgium's Flemish Interest (previously Flemish Bloc) has been subject to a *cordon sanitaire* despite a strong parliamentary presence; at its most successful, the party has held 12 percent of the seats in the Federal Chamber of Representatives and a quarter of those in the Flemish parliament (Pauwels, 2011). However, the cost of excluding the radical right from Belgium's federal government has been comparatively low, because of certain

¹⁷ Van Spanje and van der Brug (2007) exclude the Italian Social Movement (MSI) from their list, because although it faced a *cordon sanitaire*, its successor party National Alliance did not.

features of the political system. First, the constitutional ‘parity rule’ requires an equal number of Dutch-speaking and French-speaking ministers (van Haute & Deschouwer, 2018). This has resulted in a tendency for ‘symmetrical’ governments to be formed, in which Flemish and Walloon parties from the same party family are included (de Winter et al., 2006). This has reduced the likelihood – independently of the *cordon sanitaire* – of the Flemish radical right’s being included in government, because its success has not been matched by any Walloon party of the radical right (Twist, 2019, p. 164). Second, the Belgian party system is multidimensional rather than bipolar, allowing for coalitions in which parties are adjacent along some dimensions but not others (Dumont, 2011).

The *cordon sanitaire* against the relative newcomer Alternative for Germany is a stronger candidate for costly isolation of the radical right. However, while the presence of Alternative for Germany may be crucial for explaining the formation of the CDU/CSU+SDP grand coalition in 2017, this coalition had in fact already formed in 2013 – and not due to the presence of the radical right, but rather because the CDU/CSU’s traditional partner, the FPD, had failed to win any seats (Bräuninger et al., 2019). The German case also has some idiosyncratic features that may make it less appropriate for theoretical generalisation. First, Alternative for Germany is situated in a context which arguably is maximally unfavourable, where ‘new parties on the political right are automatically stigmatised as heirs of National Socialism’ (Berbair et al., 2015, p. 160). Second, the party was founded primarily as a Eurosceptic party, before transitioning later into a radical right party (Arzheimer, 2015; Schmitt-Beck, 2017). It may have possessed something of a reputational shield initially, but this shield has been rapidly dismantled as the party has increased its ties to openly extremist actors (Arzheimer, 2019b). Together with Finland, then, Germany is one of just a few cases where parliamentary representation has been followed by radicalisation rather than moderation of the radical right.¹⁸

Sweden, by contrast, would appear to be a prime candidate for an analysis of the radical right’s isolation. The Sweden Democrats are virtually without

¹⁸ The Finns Party was considered a legitimate partner initially, and it joined a governing coalition with the centre-right in 2015. However, following the ascent of a new party leader representing the more radical nationalist faction of the party in 2017, the coalition partners announced they could no longer cooperate with the Finns and that the government would resign. Shortly thereafter, however, twenty MPs (enough to secure a majority) left the Finns to remain in the cabinet under the name of Blue Reform. In other words, an anti-pact against the radical right was put in place, but it was not costly for the coalition partners since they could rely on support from the splinter faction (Jungar, 2020).

exception classified as radical right (or a similar label applied to an equivalent party family). From the parliamentary debut of the party in 2010 up to and including the formation of the Löfven II cabinet in January 2019, the mainstream parties in Sweden remained committed to not cooperating or negotiating with the SD. This commitment applied to the local political level as well, with parties at that level effectively being prohibited from forming executive coalitions with the Sweden Democrats. In 2004, the formation of a pre-electoral alliance between all four centre-right parties initiated a period of increased polarisation between the left and right blocs (Aylott and Bolin, 2007, 2015), increasing the cost of excluding potential support from the radical right (cf. Bale, 2003). Then, despite contesting the 2018 elections as an alliance, and despite the fact that close to 60 percent of MPs favoured its candidate for prime minister, the centre-right did not in fact end up in government. Instead, two of the centre-right parties chose instead to act as support parties for the incumbent centre-left minority government.

It should be acknowledged that the SD differs from many other radical right parties in terms of its historical origins. Many radical right parties in Western Europe started out as regionalist parties, as neo-liberal populist parties, or as agrarian populist parties (Ivarsflaten, 2006). By contrast, the SD has historical ties to racist movements and the extreme right, as described in more detail below. The party has tried to distance itself from its compromising past, but it still lacks the kind of ‘reputational shield’ (Ivarsflaten, 2006) possessed by parties with a more mainstream legacy. Of course, the SD is not the only radical right party in Western Europe that lacks a reputational shield; few others, however, combine this characteristic with a parliamentary position that makes their exclusion costly. This is not surprising, since parties without a reputational shield should have a harder time attracting voters, thereby making them more marginal to parliamentary competition.

Note that, while the present study focuses on Sweden, it does so by defining a multitude of cases *within* that single country. The case selection ranges from the very large to the very small, with the number of cases being justified in each empirical chapter. In chapter 4, for example, I study all 290 Swedish municipalities across three elections, making for a total of 870 cases of coalition formation. In chapter 7, by contrast, I analyse three cases of coalition formation at the national level, but in greater depth. In other words, this study is comparative in nature, but not in the cross-national sense. Analysing multiple cases within a single country increases unit homogeneity, but it raises questions about external validity and the possibility of generalisation (Pepinsky, 2019). The key here, I believe, is to explicitly address

similarities and differences between the case being studied and the broader class of cases to which it belongs. The potential for theoretical generalisation from single cases is further discussed in section 3.2.2.

3.1.1. The Swedish party system

For much of the 20th century, the Swedish party system remained remarkably stable, conforming to the ‘Scandinavian five-party model’ (Berglund & Lindström, 1978) of social democrats, conservatives, liberals, agrarians, and communists. The Social Democrats were long dominant in Swedish politics, consistently winning over 40 percent of the vote from 1932 to 1988. In fact, the party was in government uninterruptedly for 40 years – from 1936 to 1976. The Social Democrats’ main opponent has been the Moderate Party, which was a conservative party initially but which now combines liberalism and conservatism. Elections to the Swedish parliament (the *Riksdag*) are proportional, but very small parties are blocked by an electoral threshold of 4 percent of the national vote (or 12 percent of the vote in any single constituency). In 1988 and 1991, respectively, the five-party model was challenged by two parties that remain in parliament today: the Green Party and the Christian Democrats. The 1991 election also gave Sweden’s mainstream parties their first encounter with a right-wing populist party: the newly formed New Democracy, which won 6.7 percent of the vote and 24 seats (out of 349). New Democracy was a neo-liberal populist party rather than a radical right party (Mudde, 2007, pp. 47–48), although it did run on a moderately anti-immigration platform (which was then intensified in the 1994 election). Lacking a stable organisation, however, the party could not sustain its initial success, and in 1994 it lost its parliamentary representation permanently (Widfeldt, 2015, pp. 178–179).

In recent decades, the electoral dominance of the Social Democrats has diminished. Between 2002 and 2010, the party lost almost a quarter of its share of the vote. In 2018, it won less than 30 percent of the vote for the first time since 1911, although it remained the largest party. The Moderates, for their part, were quite successful throughout the 1990s, but in 2002 – in an election later called ‘catastrophic’ – the party won just over 15 percent, the lowest figure in almost three decades. Following this defeat, the party elected a new leader (Fredrik Reinfeldt), who took the party in a more centrist direction under the label of ‘the New Moderates’. In 2004, the four centre-right parties (the Moderates, the Centre Party, the Liberals, and the Christian Democrats) formed an electoral alliance which they christened the ‘Alliance for Sweden’, or just ‘the Alliance’ for short. Contesting the 2006 election on

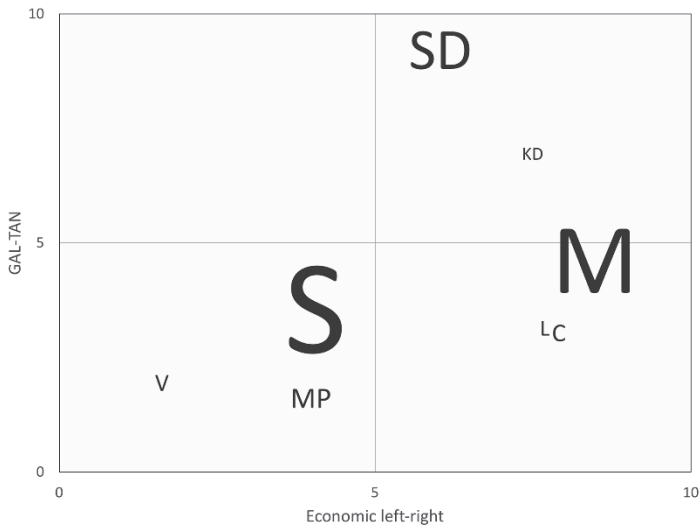
a joint platform, the Alliance managed to win a majority of seats, after which they formed the first centre-right majority government in Sweden since 1979.

In response to the formation of the Alliance, the parties in the left bloc (the Social Democrats, the Greens, and the Left Party) contested the 2010 election in a pre-electoral coalition of their own. This ‘red-green’ coalition was not able to oust the Alliance from office, but its emergence helped make party competition in the country more bipolar (Aylott & Bolin, 2007, 2015). The 2010 election also resulted in an electoral breakthrough for the Sweden Democrats, bringing an end to the era of Swedish ‘exceptionalism’ in terms of the absence of a radical right party in parliament (cf. Rydgren, 2002). Winning 5.7 percent of the vote, the party gained a pivotal position in parliament, since its presence denied a majority to both the left and the right bloc. The SD then increased its vote in the two subsequent elections (to 12.9% in 2014 and 17.5% in 2018), making clear that it would not be going the way of New Democracy. The characteristics of this party are described in more detail in the next section.

Note that I use the term ‘mainstream parties’ to refer to all of the parties except the Sweden Democrats, as is common in studies of Sweden (see, e.g., Bucken-Knapp et al., 2014; Cowell-Meyers, 2017; Dahlström and Sundell, 2012; Loxbo 2010; Widfeldt, 2015). This is a somewhat pragmatic move, inasmuch as it classifies the arguably non-mainstream Green and Left parties as mainstream. In the present context, however, I believe this is reasonable, since these parties are ‘mainstream’ in the sense of belonging to a set of established parties that forms a *cordon sanitaire* against a challenger.

The Swedish party system is summarised in Figure 3.1, as a two-dimensional policy space. Party positions are derived from the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey, with the horizontal axis showing position on economic policy and the vertical axis showing position on non-economic ‘GAL-TAN’ issues (see section 3.3.2 for details). The party labels are sized by share of seats in the 2014 election. This point in time illustrates well a number of features that characterised Swedish party competition during much of the period analysed in this book. It reflects, for example, the domination of party competition in Sweden by the Social Democrats and the Moderates, each of which constitutes the centrepiece of one of the two blocs, around which smaller parties cluster. In this book, I refer often to the ‘left bloc’, consisting of the Social Democrats (S), the Green Party (MP), and the Left Party (V); and to the ‘right bloc’, consisting of the Moderates (M), the Centre Party (C), the Liberal Party (L), and the Christian Democrats (KD). The right bloc, then, is synonymous

with the Alliance coalition, which has been highly cohesive on economic policy in particular.



Source: The 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Polk et al., 2017). *Notes:* Parties sized by share of seats following the 2014 election.

Figure 3.1. The Swedish party system in 2014

Figure 3.1 also shows the outlier nature of the SD, which combines fairly centrist economic policies with a position at the far end of the traditional-authoritarian-nationalist spectrum. It also illustrates how party polarisation has tended to be stronger along the economic axis than along the GAL-TAN one (except, again, in the case of the Sweden Democrats). Historically, the Swedish party system was characterised by competition mainly along the economic axis (Oscarsson, 1998; Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2016). By the 2018 elections, however, the GAL-TAN dimension had become equally salient, and the parties increasingly polarised on this axis. These changes are addressed in detail in chapter 7.

3.1.2. The Sweden Democrats

In order to understand Swedish mainstream party reactions to the radical right, it is necessary to provide some details and some context about the Sweden Democrats. I argued above that the party lacks a reputational shield,

due to its extremist legacy. In what follows, it will become clearer what this lack of a reputational shield actually entails. The SD was founded in 1988 as a successor to the Sweden Party (*Sverigepartiet*), which in turn had resulted from a merger two years earlier between the Progress Party (*Framstegspartiet*) and the organisation Keep Sweden Swedish (BSS, *Bevara Sverige Svenskt*) (Lodenius & Larsson, 1994, pp. 13–56). The Progress Party was a populist party that shifted in an increasingly anti-immigrant direction; Keep Sweden Swedish, for its part, displayed outright racism.

In the SD's early days, prominent positions within the party were held by people with criminal convictions and ties to various movements of the extreme right (Larsson & Ekman, 2001). The party's first spokesperson had been one of the founders of Keep Sweden Swedish, and the chairman of the party's founding meeting was later convicted of assaulting a 14-year-old immigrant boy. The spokesperson/party leader from 1989 to 1995, Anders Klarström, had been active in the neo-Nazi Nordic Realm Party (*Nordiska rikspartiet*). Critics of the Sweden Democrats have also emphasised the role played by Gustaf Ekström, an active Nazi and Waffen-SS volunteer, in the founding of the party (see, e.g., Ulvenlöv et al., 2017). The SD has challenged this claim (Karlsson, 2017), but the mere fact that it provides grounds for controversy illustrates how the party has struggled to distance itself from its extreme-right origins.

In its first party programme, formulated in 1989, the SD described Swedish immigration policy as 'suicidal' (Sverigedemokraterna, 1989). The programme championed an ethnically and culturally homogenous nation and called for the repatriation of non-European immigrants. It also argued in favour of capital punishment and restrictive abortion laws. The party contested its first election in the same year, but only won around 1,000 votes. During the latter half of the 1990s, the party worked to improve its image. A new party leader without a compromising past was elected in 1995 (Mikael Jansson), and in 1996 the party introduced a ban on political uniforms at its public meetings and demonstrations. The party also expelled a number of members with extremist ties and adopted a revised party programme in 1999. Not everyone approved of the direction the party was taking, however. The party split in 2001, when a number of disgruntled defectors left to form a new and more radical party: the National Democrats (*Nationaldemokraterna*) (Rydgren, 2006, p. 109). As a consequence, the SD lost some of its most experienced activists. On the other hand, by shedding many 'disruptive elements' and ceding them to the National Democrats, the party could attempt to craft a broader electoral appeal (Widfeldt, 2008, p. 270).

In 2005 the party chose a new leader, Jimmie Åkesson, whose importance for making the Sweden Democrats a major player in Swedish politics cannot be overstated. Åkesson had years of political experience and a background free from right-wing extremism. He had joined the party executive in 1997, when he was only 18 years old, and headed the youth section from 2000 to 2005. Under this new leadership, the party underwent an intensified process of modernisation. In the spring of 2006 it adopted a new symbol, trading the earlier fist and flame for a blue anemone flower. An accompanying press release stated that the change made sense, because the party was not the same one as it had been 10 to 15 years earlier, having ‘undergone fundamental changes for the better’ (Sverigedemokraterna, 2006; my translation). The SD then doubled its share of votes in the 2006 election (although, at just under three percent, it did not win any parliamentary seats). On the other hand, the party was now eligible for financial support in the form of public party subsidies. It also made a breakthrough at the local level, winning representation in half of Sweden’s 290 municipalities.

In the 2010 election campaign, the SD was involved in a controversy surrounding a TV commercial produced by the party. The commercial showed the Swedish state budget running out of funds, while a retired woman scrambling to get her retirement money was overtaken by a group of women clad in burqas and pushing baby prams. The message: Sweden can afford immigrants or pensioners, but not both. The Swedish Association for Senior Citizens was highly critical of the video, calling it ‘distasteful’, and the commercial was banned by the network before it aired (*Expressen*, 2010-08-28).

In the election that year, the SD doubled its share of votes once again, thereby making its parliamentary debut. It immediately became clear, however, that this did not mean it would be treated as a party like the others. When preliminary election results were shown at the Social Democrats’ headquarters on election night, the chant went up: ‘no racists on our streets!’ (*Dagens Nyheter*, 2010-09-20). Mona Sahlin, the party leader, deplored the fact that ‘a deeply xenophobic party’ had entered parliament, and vowed never to grant the SD any political influence (*Expressen*, 2010-09-20). The leader of the Moderate Party, Prime Minister Reinfeldt, also said on election night that there would be no cooperation with the Sweden Democrats, or dependence upon them (*Göteborgs-Posten*, 2010-09-20). Despite winning seats in parliament, then, the SD was still very much an outsider party. In fact, the established parties briefly considered reducing the number of members on parliamentary standing committees in order to deprive the newcomer of seats (*SVT Nyheter*, 2010-09-22). The pariah status of the Sweden

Democrats also extended beyond political competition, as exemplified by the proposal (never implemented) to have a separate queue for SD representatives at the parliamentary cafeteria (Downs, 2012, p. 50).

In 2011, the Sweden Democrats adopted a new party programme, which toned down nationalist appeals in favour of a stronger emphasis on mainstream social conservatism (Sverigedemokraterna, 2011). The programme also played down the importance of ethnicity, stating that anyone can become a Swede if sufficiently assimilated. However, these efforts to become more respectable were undermined by recurrent scandals, as in connection with the use of racist vocabulary in social media (Herkman, 2018). In 2012, therefore, the party instituted a zero-tolerance policy against racism and extremism within the party. In a letter to party members, Åkesson urged anyone who did not share the party's basic values to leave the party (Åkesson, 2012). Those who expressed themselves in a manner deemed incompatible with those values risked being expelled. Based on this policy, more than 100 members were expelled between 2012 and 2015 (Jungar, 2015).

Shortly after the zero-tolerance policy was initiated, the party faced the so-called 'iron pipe scandal'. This involved two of its most prominent representatives, Erik Almquist and Kenth Ekeröth, party spokespeople for economic affairs and justice policy respectively (Hellström, 2012). A video surfaced showing the two engaged in a dispute in Stockholm two years earlier, in which they behaved aggressively and used racist and sexist insults. Having left the scene of the dispute, they armed themselves with iron pipes from a construction site, giving the scandal its name. The video caused outrage in the media and drew harsh criticism from rival parties. Addressing the video at a press conference, Åkesson said it was one of the worst days in his political life (*Expressen*, 2012-11-14). Almquist subsequently left the party; Ekeröth faced only a 'time out' from his political duties. This led to accusations that the Sweden Democrats had double standards, expelling grassroots members while turning a blind eye to the transgressions of those more highly placed (Berglin et al., 2012). However, although rival parties have made heavy use of scandals of this kind to argue that the SD is not a party like the others, such efforts have had little effect on voter support for the party (Rydgren & van der Meiden, 2019).

In the 2014 election, the SD again doubled its share of votes, coming in at almost 13 percent. And once again, neither of the established blocs controlled a majority of seats. Nevertheless, the other parties were determined to prevent the Sweden Democrats from having any influence over government

formation. As part of this isolation, they concluded the ‘December agreement’, described below.

3.1.3. The December agreement

The December agreement is fundamental for understanding the survival of the Löfven I cabinet that took office after the 2014 election (Bäck & Hellström, 2015; Bjereld et al., 2016; Lindvall et al., 2017). I analyse the agreement in more detail in chapter 7. Since I reference this agreement in earlier empirical chapters, however, I summarise it here for convenience.

Following the 2014 election, the Social Democrats and the Greens formed a minority government formally supported by the Left Party. The Alliance tolerated the formation of this cabinet by abstaining in its favour, but the government faced a majority opposition consisting of the four Alliance parties and the Sweden Democrats. The event that triggered the December agreement was the state-budget vote that took place shortly after the investiture vote. The Swedish budget vote is a sequential process, where alternative proposals face off against each other in pairs until a final vote remains. According to the established voting practice in Sweden, parties (or coalitions thereof) vote for their own budget proposal, and then abstain in later votes after it has been eliminated. In the 2014 budget vote, the government and its support party proposed a joint budget, against which a joint Alliance budget stood. According to established practice, the government’s budget ought – once the budget proposed by the Sweden Democrats had been eliminated – to have prevailed, because the Alliance held fewer seats and the SD was expected to abstain. Defying the established practice, however, the SD voted in favour of the Alliance’s proposal, meaning that the government lost the vote. Being unable to pass the budget, Prime Minister Löfven then announced he intended to call a snap election, to be held in March 2015. (For constitutional reasons, the election could only be called on 29 December at the earliest – three months after the newly elected parliament first convened.)

In an attempt to avoid a snap election, the government and the Alliance parties entered negotiations on how the earlier practice, which the SD had disrupted, could be restored. The threat of another election was cancelled on 27 December, when the parties announced they had come to an agreement – aptly named the ‘December agreement’. According to this agreement, the prime-ministerial candidate supported by a coalition of parties larger than any other conceivable coalition would be tolerated, and thus enabled to form a government. Furthermore, a minority cabinet would be able to pass its budget, through abstention by the opposition if necessary. In essence, the agreement

would allow the larger of the two blocs to govern as a minority, regardless of how many seats the SD held.¹⁹ The agreement was intended to remain in place until the 2022 elections. Already in October 2015, however, the Christian Democrats defected (following conflict within that party) from the agreement, which was subsequently abandoned by the other parties as well.

3.1.4. Comparing national and local political levels

Throughout this study, I draw parallels between coalition formation at the local level and at the national level. I argue that the two are comparable in the sense that the same general theories and mechanisms can be used to explain coalition formation at both levels. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that the two differ in important ways.

Formally speaking, Swedish municipalities have a system of ‘assembly government’, where the composition of the executive committee (the closest equivalent of the government at the national level) is based on proportional representation (Bäck, 2006). In other words, all parties that control enough seats are represented in the executive, which therefore does not depend on the confidence of a majority on the municipal council (the local ‘parliament’). In the 1960s, however, Swedish municipalities started implementing an informal system of ‘limited majority rule’, whereby all committee leaders, including the leader of the executive committee (the closest equivalent of the prime minister) is appointed by a council majority. Swedish municipalities are thus governed by informal coalitions of parties. This system has been described as ‘quasi-parliamentary’, and almost all Swedish municipalities had adopted it by the late 1960s (Bäck, 2006; Bäck et al., 2000). A relative majority of votes is required both for appointing committee leaders and for passing the municipal budget, but there is no formal investiture vote. This means that, to the extent Swedish municipalities can be considered quasi-parliamentary, they are so in the sense of positive parliamentarism (cf. Bergman, 1993; Louwerse, 2014).²⁰

At the national level, Sweden is instead characterised by negative parliamentarism, where a government must be tolerated (but need not be actively

¹⁹ The agreement also included additional stipulations about the budget vote (which are not relevant in the present context), as well as three policy areas intended for cross-bloc cooperation (defence, pensions, and energy).

²⁰ The introduction of ‘true’ parliamentarism in Swedish municipalities has been frequently debated (Bäck, 1998; Bergman, 1999). Before the adoption of a new municipal law in 2017, it had been proposed that municipalities that were interested in majority rule should be allowed to try it out for the 2018–2022 period. In the end this proposal was dropped, primarily on grounds that it was unclear how majority rule would contribute to revitalising municipal politics (Regeringskansliet, 2017, p. 168).

supported) by an absolute majority. As I see it, however, these institutional differences do not pose any great problems for the present study, mainly because they are not crucial for the kinds of comparison I make between the two political levels. First, I argue that the mechanism I use to explain the formation of cross-bloc coalitions at the local level has analytical value at the national level as well; in this mechanism, the distinction between positive and negative voting rules plays no important part. Second, national governments need to win not just the investiture vote but the state-budget vote as well. Following a reform of the budget procedure in the 1990s, a government which fails to pass a finance bill came to be regarded as having lost a *de facto* vote of confidence (Allern & Aylott, 2009; Christiansen & Damgaard, 2008). In this vote, as at the local level, a relative majority is needed. Like the authors of earlier studies (Bäck, 2003b; Loxbo, 2010), then, I use Swedish municipal data to test general theories of coalition formation. I use the terms ‘government’ and ‘cabinet’ (interchangeably) to refer to the political executive at both the local and the national level – for the sake of simplicity and in adherence to the established terminology of coalition theory.

While policy- and vote-seeking behaviour does not necessarily differ much between the two levels, analysing office-seeking strategies at the local level requires that we heed certain considerations. In the national government, for instance, the largest party in a governing coalition will typically hold the position of prime minister, while the other portfolios are distributed largely in proportion to the share of seats held by the different parties.²¹ At the Swedish municipal level, the closest equivalent of the prime minister is the executive committee leader, who also typically belongs to the largest party in the governing coalition. The problem at the local level, however, is that there may be few other valuable positions to go around. The vast majority of elected party representatives at the local level receive little or no remuneration for their political work, which they instead carry out in their spare time. In small municipalities, the executive committee leader may be the only person with a paid position that makes full-time political work possible. Where there are two paid positions (or ‘commissionerships’), the other is normally given to the opposition and held by the largest opposition party. In large municipalities, there are multiple full-time commissionerships devoted

²¹ This tendency, dubbed ‘Gamson’s Law’, is often described as one of the strongest empirical relationships in political science (Browne & Franklin, 1973; Gamson, 1961; Warwick & Druckman, 2006). Note however that the ‘law’ shows systematic deviations from perfect proportionality, most notably through the overcompensation afforded small parties in terms of portfolios (Bäck et al., 2009).

to different policy areas, much like government portfolios at the national level. In these cases, the executive-committee leadership remains the most prestigious and influential position. In sum, I assume that office-seeking motivations matter at the local level just as they do at the national level; however, I remain attentive to the differences described above.

3.2. A Multi-Method Approach

The distinction between ‘quantitative’ (large-n) and ‘qualitative’ (small-n) methods has arguably been one of the most contested fault lines within political science research (Mahoney & Goertz, 2006). In their influential book *Designing Social Inquiry*, King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) famously argued that all research in the social sciences – including case studies – should adhere to the logic of cross-case covariational inference. Their book has been both lauded and criticised, but it has also challenged qualitative researchers to refine their concepts and methods (see e.g. Brady & Collier, 2010; George & Bennett, 2005; Gerring, 2006; Goertz, 2006; Mahoney, 2008; Ragin, 2009). According to one way of viewing the difference between quantitative and qualitative approaches, the former focus on the ‘effects of causes’, while the latter focus on the ‘causes of effects’ (Mahoney & Goertz, 2006, p. 230). In other words, statistical analysis involves estimating average effects across a large number of cases; case studies explain specific outcomes in particular cases. The two approaches thus have distinct strengths and weaknesses, making them appropriate for answering different research questions (Brady & Collier, 2010; Sayer, 1992). Large-n studies are better for isolating effects, estimating their relative magnitude, and generating results that can be generalised from samples to populations. Small-n studies, meanwhile, are better for analysing time order, revealing the mechanisms that underlie cross-case effects, and maximising the validity of findings.

In recent years, there have been calls to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches in a *multi-method* (or *mixed-methods*) research design, with an eye to maximising their respective strengths and minimising their weaknesses, thereby potentially producing ‘an analytic payoff [that] is greater than the sum of the parts’ (Lieberman, 2005, p. 436; see also, e.g., Berg-Schlosser, 2012; Braumoeller & Bennett, 2002; Goertz, 2017; Seawright, 2016; Small, 2011). Bäck & Dumont (2007, p. 468) advocate the use of mixed methods specifically for coalition research:

Focusing only on the coalition theories’ predictive performance, however, conceals the fact that we are typically interested in *explaining* coalition forma-

tion. We agree with Bennett (1999), who argues that ‘adequate causal explanations must include arguments about both causal effects and causal mechanisms’. Often, we do not have a good understanding of the causal mechanisms that explain the effects found in large-*n* coalition studies.

Similarly, Goertz (2017, p. 1) argues that ‘[d]emonstrating a causal effect is only half the job, the second half involves specifying the causal mechanism and empirically examining it, usually through case studies’. Saving the discussion of causal mechanisms for section 3.2.2, I now describe briefly how the multi-method approach is used in this study.

Chapters 4 and 5 constitute the clearest example of multi-method research, being based on the logic of a *nested analysis* (Lieberman, 2005). In a nested analysis, one combines the statistical analysis of a large sample of cases with the in-depth study of a small number of cases contained within the large sample. An advantage of nesting the case-study analysis within the larger sample is that the results of the statistical analysis can be used to guide the selection of cases used for the in-depth study (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Depending on its characteristics relative to those in the statistical model, a case can serve different purposes, such as identifying causal mechanisms or omitted variables. The focus on a smaller number of cases also allows us to assess the validity of the assumptions underlying the statistical analysis.

A nested analysis is not necessary, however, in order to realize the advantages from mixing methods. Indeed, as Seawright (2016, p. 10) observes, the same study is not even required: ‘Integrative multi-method research designs can be implemented within a single study, perhaps by a single author, but they can also play out across debates among scholars; integrative designs are a wonderful tool for evaluating and critiquing others’ research’. While the case studies in chapter 7 are not nested within a larger population of cases, my analysis of them is of course situated within a broader research tradition. However, unlike in most coalition research, which takes place in a large-*n* statistical setting, the focus here on a small number of cases allows for a relaxation of assumptions, as well as for closer conceptual analysis and an improved assessment of measurement error. The small-*n* focus means that the cases are analysed more in-depth; however, I am careful to use concepts and measurements that travel to a large-*n* setting, since such commensurability is crucial for effective multi-method research (Ahram,

2013; Rohlfing, 2007).²² To this end, the case studies in chapter 7 serve to complement large-n studies by assessing what works well (and less well), and by proposing concepts and measurements that can be used in further cross-national large-n studies.

3.2.1. Statistical analysis

The most common application of statistical analysis in the social sciences, without doubt, is the ubiquitous linear regression model. Linear regression allows us to estimate the linear relationship between an independent variable *X* and a dependent variable *Y* across a sample of cases, typically by minimising the difference between observed and predicted values (the ‘ordinary least squares’, or ‘OLS’ approach). As the name suggests, linear regression assumes that the relationship between the variables is indeed linear, therefore essentially requiring a continuous dependent variable. When studying coalition formation, however, we are most often interested in categorical outcomes. Such outcomes include both the type of cabinet that forms (e.g., minority or majority) and the composition of cabinets (which parties are included).

Categorical outcomes can be interpreted in terms of probabilities, such as: ‘How likely is a cross-bloc coalition to be formed at the local level in Sweden?’ As we shall see in chapter 4, in situations where neither the left nor the right bloc controlled a majority of seats, six out of ten cabinets formed at the local level in 2014 were cross-bloc coalitions. We may therefore conclude that the likelihood of observing a cross-bloc coalition in any such municipality for that year (given no other information) is 60%. To improve this prediction, we need to move beyond mere proportions and to introduce independent variables that we believe affect the occurrence of the outcome of interest. This can be done using linear regression (i.e., the ‘linear probability model’); however, such an approach faces multiple problems, as in connection with predicting probabilities that exceed 1 or fall below 0. Instead of a linear relationship, then, probabilities are more appropriately modelled using an S-shaped curve where probabilities range from 0 to 1, and where the effect of an independent variable decreases as it approaches either extreme (for an intuitive introduction, see Pampel, 2000). For example, an increase of 5 percentage points in a party’s share of seats may have a larger effect on the probability of its being included in a governing coalition if it represents a

²² I address the potential problem of incompatible theoretical claims when discussing causal mechanisms in section 3.2.2.

change from, say, 10–15% than from 40–45%. A party controlling 40% of the seats would already have a high probability of inclusion, and an additional 5-point increase would do little to increase this already high probability.

The standard way of transforming the dependent variable into the functional form described above is the logistic (or ‘logit’) transformation. While linear regression typically relies on OLS estimation, coefficients in logit models are estimated using maximum likelihood procedures. The basic function of maximum likelihood estimation is to find the coefficient estimates that are most likely to produce the observed data. Returning to the example above, the probability of a cross-bloc coalition in 2014 was 60% (in situations with no bloc majority). Furthermore, such coalitions were more common in municipalities where the Sweden Democrats controlled the balance of power between the left and right blocs (71%).²³ In a binary logit model predicting cross-bloc coalitions from control of the balance of power by the SD, maximum likelihood estimation will thus produce a positive coefficient for this independent variable. The size of the coefficient will, of course, depend on how much more likely the outcome is across different values of the independent variable. As in linear regression, the significance of a logit coefficient is a function of its size relative to its standard error. However, both significance levels and coefficient estimates are sensitive to sample size. A commonly cited rule of thumb is therefore to have at least 10 observations per independent variable, with a minimum of 100 observations (Long, 1997, p. 54).²⁴ I mostly abide by this recommendation in this study, and when I do not, I provide additional robustness checks. Details on the specific statistical models I use can be found in chapter 4.

Note that the large-*n* data set used here does not constitute a probability sample; rather, it could be described as an ‘apparent population’ (Berk et al., 1995) comprising *all Swedish municipalities*. For each election, no additional data could be collected, even in principle. When there is no clear relationship between a sample and a population, different approaches to interpreting statistical significance have been proposed (Bollen, 1995). While sample size and variability remain the crucial aspects for interpreting ‘population’ effects, we should refrain from evaluating the results in terms of null-hypothesis significance testing (Gill, 2001). This echoes a more general argument that

²³ ‘Controlling the balance of power’ refers here to a situation where neither the left nor the right bloc holds a majority of seats, and where the SD’s seats are enough to provide either bloc with a majority (as described in more detail in chapter 4).

²⁴ If the outcome is highly skewed, even larger samples are needed. Fortunately, the outcomes studied here are relatively well-balanced.

statistical analysis should focus on effect size (substantive significance), rather than on p-values (statistical significance). While p-values do have a clear interpretation when we generalise from samples to populations, the same argument still applies (Wasserstein & Lazar, 2016). Due to convention, I present significance levels for the statistical results in this study. Since my samples are relatively small, I take the pragmatic route of viewing significance as a shorthand for robustness, since it reflects the intuitive idea that we should have more confidence in results that are based on a larger number of observations.²⁵ Nevertheless, the results are interpreted in terms of effect size.

3.2.2. Causal mechanisms and process tracing

In the statistical analysis of a bivariate relationship across a number of cases, we may establish that an independent variable X is associated with a dependent variable Y. By introducing additional independent variables (controlling for potential confounders), we can make a stronger claim that X *causes* Y.²⁶ Nevertheless, in trying to explain *how* X causes Y, researchers in the social sciences are increasingly turning to the study of *casual mechanisms* (Gerring, 2008). Figure 3.2 illustrates how an independent and a dependent variable (X and Y) are connected by a causal mechanism. When I perform a statistical analysis of coalition formation at the local level in chapter 4, I focus only on the X and the Y (although the choice of variables is of course theory-guided). In my closer study of the coalition formation processes in a small number of municipalities in chapter 5, I look more closely inside the dashed box to assess the mechanism by which X produces Y.

What, then, is a causal mechanism? Unfortunately, there is no consensus on this question. Mahoney (2001) finds over 24 definitions; Gerring (2008) distinguishes nine different meanings (see Hedström & Ylikoski, 2010 for an overview). Here I adopt the position advocated by Hedström and Swedberg (1998, p. 25), to the effect that ‘the essence of the mechanism approach is to be found in a special *style of theorizing* rather than any specific definition of what a social mechanism is’. This style, they argue, is based on the four principles of *action*, *precision*, *abstraction*, and *reduction* (pp. 24–25). Action refers to the idea that explanations should proceed by reference to the causes and consequences of individual action, rather than to associations between variables. Precision means that explanations should take the form of ‘middle-

²⁵ In this vein, significance can instead be computed using resampling techniques such as jackknifing or bootstrapping; however, this makes no substantive difference for the results presented in this book.

²⁶ We can go further with the help of e.g. instrumental variables or regression discontinuities (techniques not used here).

range' theorising (Merton, 1968), instead of any appeal to universal social laws. The principle of abstraction refers to the need to eliminate irrelevant factors from the explanation; that of reduction relates to the goal of narrowing the gap between input and output. The aim of this approach, in my understanding, is to provide parsimonious explanations at a level of abstraction that is more general than the individual case, without aspiring to the level of a universal law.

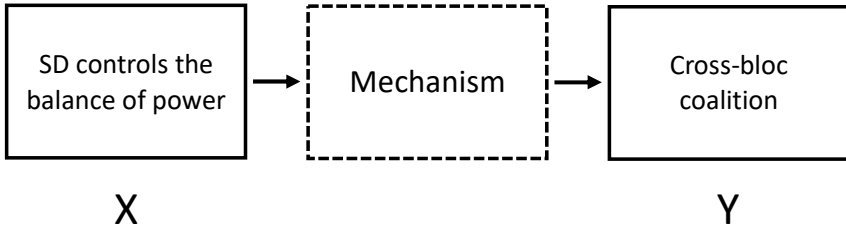


Figure 3.2. A causal mechanism connecting X and Y

Following the tradition described above, I take mechanisms to be *analytical constructs* rather than empirical entities operating ‘out there’. This is not to say that there are no such entities, only that ‘the generative mechanisms of the world out there seldom present themselves to us directly “as they really are”’ (Bengtsson & Hertting, 2014, p. 718). Furthermore, mechanisms as analytical constructs should be distinguished from empirical narratives and ‘historically specific explanations’ (Hall, 2008); whereas the latter are *case-centred*, the former are instead *theory-centred*. Understood as analytical constructs, the various formal models developed within game theory are prototypical mechanisms – general patterns of interaction that apply to a multitude of settings. Nevertheless, mechanisms can be of both the formal and the informal kind (Bengtsson & Hertting, 2014, p. 716; Cowen, 1998); in this book, I opt for the latter.

Another important distinction is that a mechanism is not just an intervening variable, but rather ‘a complex system, which produces an outcome by the interaction of a number of parts’ (Glennan, 1996, p. 52). Stated otherwise, it is ‘a set of interacting parts – an assembly of elements producing an effect not inherent in any one of them’ (Hernes, 1998, p. 74). Drawing on these ideas, I view mechanisms as consisting of a series of parts, where each

part refers to *an actor engaged in an activity* (Beach & Pedersen, 2013).²⁷ The focus on actors and activities reflects the principle of ‘methodological individualism’ that underlies most research in the rational choice tradition: in principle, according to this view, social phenomena are ultimately explicable in terms of individual actors and their properties, actions, and interactions. As Udehn (2002) notes, however, there are multiple versions of this principle. In this book, I do not take the strong methodological individualist position that the only valid unit of social analysis is the individual. Instead I rely on a ‘weak’ version allowing for explanations in terms of collective actors and institutional constraints (cf. chapter 2).

I shall briefly illustrate what a mechanism looks like in the approach I use here, drawing on the idea of reputational constraint discussed earlier (section 2.4). A reputational constraint mechanism can be understood as consisting of three parts, which I describe here using an example relating to cooperation with the radical right by mainstream parties in Sweden. In the first part of the mechanism, the Moderates pursue a strategy of isolating the Sweden Democrats. By signalling to voters that the SD is a party ‘unlike the others’ with which they will not cooperate, they hope to reduce the electoral threat it poses. In the second part (at a later point in time), the Moderates find that it would nonetheless be strategically advantageous to cooperate with the SD, because its support is crucial for winning votes in parliament. In the third part of the mechanism, the Moderates refrain all the same from entering into cooperation with the SD, because they fear they will be punished by voters for going against their earlier commitments. The expected voter sanctions thus result in a revised preference ordering of strategies, in favour of the status quo. The reputational constraint mechanism thus enables us to explain why the Moderates do not engage in cooperation with the SD, although their strategic incentives might suggest that they should.

In this example, each of the three parts is required for the mechanism to work. If there is no initial commitment, there is no threat to the Moderates’ reputation. Similarly, if there is no willingness to engage in cooperation, there can be no constraint on so doing. Finally, if there is no threat of voter sanctions, or if it such a threat either is not perceived by the party or is not severe enough to result in a revised preference ordering, then there is no constraint. For a mechanism to constitute a plausible explanation, we need to establish the presence of observable implications relating to all of its

²⁷ Beach and Pedersen (2013) refer to *entities* rather than *actors*; in the present study, however, there are no non-actor entities (see also Hedström, 2008; Machamer et al., 2000; Rohlfing, 2012).

constituent parts. In this sense, mechanism-based explanations are based on a logic of determinism. Since statistical analysis relies on a logic of probability, some scholars have cautioned that the results from small-*n* and large-*n* analyses may therefore be incompatible, potentially interfering with a nested research design (Beach & Pedersen, 2016, pp. 157–158). For the nested part of the present study, however, I believe that no serious problems arise in this regard. First, my outcome and my main independent variable of interest are both categorical; thus, the logic of my case selection is compatible with a mechanism-based approach (cf. Beach & Pedersen, 2018, pp. 848–850). Second, the kind of theoretical claims I make in the large-*n* study – although formulated in probabilistic terms – can be translated into deterministic ones in terms of the conditions necessary for the mechanism to be operational (as described in more detail in chapter 5).

Note that, although each part of a mechanism is a necessary condition, this does not mean the mechanism itself is necessary for the outcome it produces, which could occur for other reasons. In chapter 5, for example, I argue that a pivotal position for the radical right is part of a mechanism that produces cross-bloc coalitions; however, such coalitions also form in the absence of the radical right. Note too that the distinction between what constitutes a mechanism and what constitutes a part of a mechanism is largely a pragmatic matter, depending on one's analytical focus. In the above example concerning reputational constraint, the threat of voter sanctions is treated as a part of the mechanism; however, one might wish instead to unpack this part into a multi-part mechanism of its own. In the words of Ylikoski (2019, p. 16), 'any combination of mechanisms is also a mechanism'.

To analyse causal mechanisms empirically, I turn to *process tracing*. Beach and Pedersen (2013) distinguish between three kinds of process tracing: theory-testing, theory-building, and outcome-explaining. In this study I make use of the first two kinds, which are theory-centred. The distinction between theory-testing and theory-building mirrors the distinction made by others between deductive and inductive process tracing (Bennett & Checkel, 2015; George & Bennett, 2005; van Evera, 1997). When potential explanations are readily provided by established theories, theory-testing (or deductive) process tracing can be used in a search for the observable implications of these explanations.²⁸ In so doing, one is less concerned with the number of

²⁸ An argument could be made that the kind of deductive process tracing in which I engage in chapter 5 has more in common with what is sometimes termed 'congruence analysis'. For Beach and Pedersen (2016, p. 33), the difference between congruence analysis and process tracing lies in the distinction

pieces of evidence and more interested in the ability of any given piece of evidence to discriminate between competing explanations (Collier, 2011; Mahoney, 2012).²⁹ This can be done using formal Bayesian logic (Bennett, 2008; Fairfield & Charman, 2017); however, since such a strategy cannot be used for inductive purposes (Bennett, 2015), I refrain from a formal approach here. Even an informal approach, however, needs to be as transparent as possible (Dunning, 2015; Elman et al., 2018; Moravcsik, 2014). I address this concern by using rigorous analytical frameworks (described in each empirical chapter), and by backing up all non-trivial empirical claims with cited sources.

When existing theories do not provide adequate guidance, theory-building (or inductive) process tracing is used ‘to build a generalizable theoretical explanation from empirical evidence, inferring that a more general causal mechanism exists from the facts of a particular case’ (Beach & Pedersen, 2013, p. 3). However, inductive analysis must remain theory-centred, and for explanations to be generalisable, they must be in some sense portable – able to travel from the present case to other potential cases (Falleti & Lynch, 2009; Mahoney, 2001; Pouliot, 2015; Yin, 2013; Ylikoski, 2019). Here I follow Bengtsson & Hertting (2014), who argue in favour of ‘rationalistic generalisation’. According to this approach, mechanisms are understood as analytical constructs (or ‘ideal-types’) that can be derived from empirical observations and then generalised to other cases in similar contexts, based on an assumption of thin rationality:

Ideal-type mechanisms generate portability by distilling how actors of different kinds perceived their situations so their intentions and actions become reasonable through the application of an analytic framework [...]. [T]he form of generalization provided by our approach is that we can expect that a certain mechanism observed in one setting *may* be operative in other similar (types of) contexts with a similar constellation of, thinly rational, actors. But we cannot predict it with certainty, or with some, more or less precise, probability [...]. One way of describing this form of generalization is that identifying a certain mechanism in one context generates ‘reasonable expectations of finding a similar mechanism in other similar settings’ [...]. If we find an ideal-

between a minimalist and a systems understanding of mechanisms (see also Blatter & Haverland, 2012). In chapter 5, I take the minimalist route when surveying a medium number of cases for deductive evidence, and I rely on a systems understanding when inductively identifying a multi-part mechanism. For simplicity, I find it reasonable to refer to the whole enterprise simply as process tracing.

²⁹ Note that, since process tracing relies on *within-case* observations, the statistical cross-case ‘degrees of freedom problem’ (more variables than cases) does not apply (Campbell, 1975).

type rationalistic mechanism to be fruitful for interpreting, understanding or explaining one observed case, we can reasonably expect it to be of relevance for interpreting, understanding, or explaining other similar cases as well (Bengtsson & Hertting, 2014, pp. 718–719).

In sum, a mechanism should provide us with the means to understand how and why certain actions or outcomes come about. It should be formulated at a level of abstraction that allows it to travel beyond the specific case being analysed. Finally, generalisation by mechanism relies neither on determinism nor on probability, but instead on the expectation that thinly rational actors in similar situations will behave in much the same way. Stated otherwise, the identification of a theoretically relevant mechanism in one case adds to an analytical ‘toolbox’ that can be useful for explaining other cases.

3.3. Material

The analyses in this book rely on highly varied sources of empirical material, but they can all be said to fall into one of the four following categories: (1) party size and cabinet composition; (2) party policy positions; (3) voter preferences; and (4) press material and interviews. Table 3.1 shows which types of material are used in which chapters, and a description of the four categories follows.

Table 3.1. Overview of the empirical material

Type of material used	Chapter			
	4	5	6	7
Party size and cabinet composition	X			X
Party policy positions	X		X	X
Voter preferences			X	
Press material and interviews		X	X	X

3.3.1. Party size and cabinet composition

This type of data, used for predicting coalitions, is the least complicated. For the national level, party size (seat allocation) and cabinet composition has been sourced from the ParlGov Database (Döring & Manow, 2019). For the

local level, data on party size were retrieved from the Swedish Election Authority (*Valmyndigheten*). Since, as discussed earlier, Swedish municipalities do not have true parliamentary systems, identifying cabinet composition in their case is not entirely straightforward. Here I rely on data compiled by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (*Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner*), which were collected through surveys sent to each of Sweden's 290 municipalities following the 2006, 2010, and 2014 elections (described in more detail in chapter 4).

3.3.2. Party policy positions

Party size and cabinet composition are amenable to unambiguous measurement, but unfortunately the same cannot be said of party policy positions. Measuring such positions entails at least two difficult endeavours: first, deciding which dimension(s) of political conflict are most important in structuring political competition; and second, deciding how the parties are placed along such a dimension (see Warwick, 2002 for an overview related to government coalitions). As mentioned earlier, the Swedish party system has historically been structured along a single left-right dimension mainly reflecting economic policy (Oscarsson, 1998). More recently, however, politics across Europe has been increasingly affected by the rising salience of a dimension known as the 'new politics', 'the (cultural) value dimension', or 'GAL-TAN'.³⁰ The extent to which multiple dimensions are independent of each other varies between countries (Bakker et al., 2012). Economic and GAL-TAN party positions in Sweden, as estimated in 2017 (see below), are about equally salient, but correlated at only 0.43. This suggests that both dimensions must be considered if we are to account for the intricacy of the party system (cf. Keman, 2007). However, although Debus (2009) finds that both economic issues and social policy matter for coalition formation, coalition research often relies on a single dominant dimension of political conflict.³¹ I return below to the question of how plausible a unidimensional approach is in the Swedish case.

³⁰ See, e.g., Bornschieer (2010), Hooghe et al. (2010) and Kriesi (2010). 'GAL' refers to Green-Alternative-Libertarian, while 'TAN' stands for Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist (these two constituting the two poles of this dimension) (Marks et al., 2006). Some studies have also suggested positioning on the European Union as a distinct and cross-cutting dimension, with Euroscepticism found at both left and right extremes (Bakker et al., 2012; Hooghe et al., 2002).

³¹ Most multidimensional models are faced with the problem of cycling majorities, where '[a]ny proposed bundle of policy positions will be majority-defeated by another, which in turn will be majority-defeated by another, with this process continuing until it cycles back to the original proposal

There are five main approaches to estimating the positions of political parties: (1) roll-call behaviour; (2) voter surveys; (3) party-elite surveys; (4) expert surveys; and (5) party manifestos (for an overview, see Krouwel & van Elfrinkhof, 2014). In this book, I have primarily opted to use expert survey data on party positions. Before turning to these data in more detail, I first describe the alternative approaches and how they fare for purposes of this study. Laver and Schofield (1998), for their part, regard data on roll-call behaviour as entirely inappropriate for analysing coalition behaviour. Since parties in government frequently vote together as a bloc, ‘roll calls are in a very real sense outputs of, rather than inputs to, the politics of coalition’ (Laver & Schofield, 1998, p. 52). It bears noting, moreover, that votes in the Swedish parliament are decided by acclamation unless a member demands otherwise, meaning that not all votes are recorded.³²

In voter surveys, respondents are asked to place either themselves or the parties (or both) along one or more dimensions (usually the left-right one). This information can then be used to derive party positions, either from voters’ positions or from their perceptions. A problem with this approach is that voters are likely to differ in how they interpret the questions (Evans et al., 1996), most likely more so than party experts. Furthermore, varying levels of political knowledge will bias voter data on party positions toward certain groups (Latcheva, 2011). In the case of party-elite surveys, we would expect these respondents to be more ideologically biased (or strategic) than experts are when assigning positions to rival parties. Self-placement by party elites is a more promising approach, where for example the median MP can be used as a proxy for the party’s position. Nevertheless, a problem shared by voter and party-elite surveys is that they typically involve only self-placement along a general left-right dimension. Potentially, depending on available survey items, dimensions such as economic left-right or GAL-TAN can be scaled by applying factor-analytical methods to different policy issues (Leimgruber et al., 2010; van der Brug & van Spanje, 2009). However, such a construction relies on a number of crucial choices that multiply into the dimension being measured.

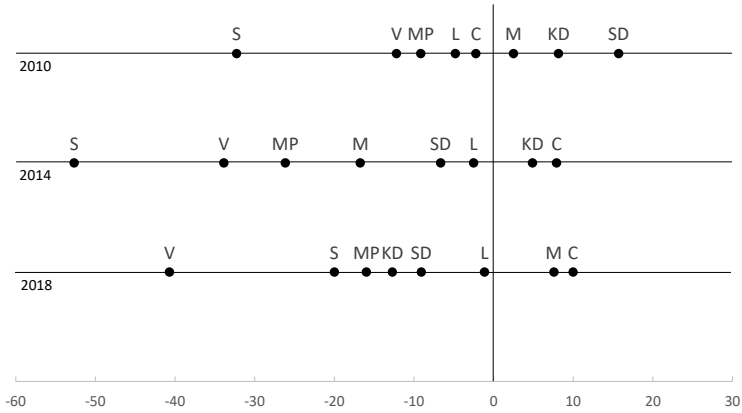
Due to a lack of data on party positions at the local level in Sweden, I do in fact rely on elite survey data to construct a measurement of party position in chapter 4. While such a scale could be constructed in various ways, I argue this has but little consequence for the analysis in chapter 4. First, I use the

and begins all over again’ (Laver & Shepsle, 1996, p. 10). In consequence, such models are capable of predicting a single or a limited number of outcomes only under rare conditions.

³² For a comparative overview, see Saalfeld (1995).

estimate to compute a dependent variable measuring the policy diversity of municipal coalitions; however, I also replicate the results using a dependent variable indicating whether or not coalitions are formed across the divide between left and right blocs (a variable which is agnostic about spatial positions). Second, I use the estimate to measure the ideological polarisation of party systems and the distance between the left and right blocs – but only as control variables. Third, in chapter 4 I only predict *type* of cabinet (e.g., minority/majority/cross-bloc), which means the outcome is much less sensitive than it is when I predict actual cabinet *composition*, as I do in chapter 7.

As for party manifestos, a particularly attractive feature of such documents is that they provide information about party policy preferences that is largely independent of the coalition bargaining process. Furthermore, any party position derived from a manifesto can, in principle, be verified by other scholars independently. The Manifesto Project (also known as CMP or MARPOR) has produced a rich time series of coded documents for a large number of European countries and elections (Budge, 2001; Klingemann, 2006; Volkens et al., 2019). The content of these documents is coded into a number of different policy areas, which can then be used to derive various ideological dimensions. The most commonly used dimension is the RILE scale, which provides estimates of party positions on a general left-right dimension (Laver & Budge, 1992). While popular, this measurement is also controversial and has been the subject of much scholarly debate (Gemenis, 2013; Mölder, 2016). Variations on the RILE scale or on other dimensions, such as economic left-right or GAL-TAN, can in principle be derived from manifesto data; however, the choice of which items to include and how to scale them – issues on which there is no consensus – has fundamental consequences for the resulting map of party positions (Benoit & Laver, 2006; Gomez et al., 2016; Lowe et al., 2011; Ray, 2007).



Source: The Manifesto Project (Volvens et al., 2019). Notes: Party positions on the general left-right (RILE) scale, ranging from extreme left (-100) to extreme right (100).

Figure 3.3. Left-right party placements based on manifesto data (2010–2018)

For the Swedish case, RILE positions for all eight parliamentary parties across three elections (2010, 2014, and 2018) are shown in Figure 3.3. I would argue that, taken as positions reflecting the formation of potential coalitions, these estimates lack face validity. For 2010 and 2014, for example, the RILE measurement places the Social Democrats (far) to the left of the Left Party. In terms of both ordinal rankings and interval placement, these positions appear suspect. The Swedish case also illustrates a problem with the comparability of party manifestos. For the 2010 and 2014 elections, namely, the Moderates published no manifesto of their own – only joint Alliance manifestos (the other three Alliance parties had their own manifestos). These Alliance manifestos are in fact the documents used to estimate the position of the Moderates in 2010 and 2014.³³ The drastic left-to-right movement of the Moderates from 2014 to 2018 may partly reflect the fact that the party once again campaigned on its own manifesto.

Overall, the RILE positions are highly volatile over time. Indeed, it has been argued that absolute party positions derived from manifestos ‘cannot be taken at face value because parties use election programs as an information short cut to signal major policy shifts to voters’ (Franzmann & Kaiser, 2006, p. 173; see also Pelizzo, 2003). If the main analytical goal is to assess change

³³ Such a use of joint documents invalidates the argument that party manifestos are independent of the coalition bargaining process.

over time, then the volatility of manifesto data may very well be a feature rather than a bug (McDonald et al., 2007; Meyer, 2013 ch. 3). For analysing coalitions, however, I find such data less appropriate (at least for the Swedish case and the relevant time period).

The Chapel Hill Expert Survey

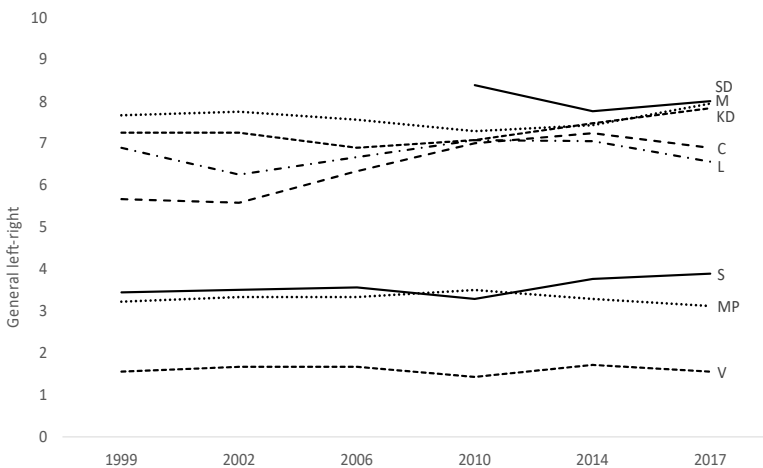
The primary source of party policy positions used in this book is the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, abbreviated as 'CHES' (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017). In an expert survey, academic scholars who are considered experts on the party system in their respective countries are asked to estimate party positions along pre-defined policy dimensions. In the words of Benoit and Laver (2006, p. 77), the purpose of an expert survey is to 'summarize [experts'] accumulated wisdom in a systematic way, seeking an unbiased estimate of their judgements on particular matters that are defined *a priori*'. Different expert surveys have been shown to correlate well with each other, as well as with alternative estimates of party positions derived from voter perceptions, election manifestos, and elite surveys (Hooghe et al., 2010; Marks et al., 2007; Netjes & Binnema, 2007; Ray, 2007; Steenbergen & Marks, 2007; Whitefield et al., 2007).

Budge (2000) identifies four main weaknesses of expert surveys: (1) what 'party' is being located – leaders, activists, voters, or all three combined?; (2) what are the criteria for assigning parties their positions?; (3) do judgments refer to intentions and preferences or to behaviour?; and (4) what time period is being judged? To weakness number 2 we can add the problem of expert bias (Benoit & Laver, 2006, pp. 90–92; Curini, 2010). The question of what party is being located is addressed in the Chapel Hill survey by asking respondents for 'the position of the leadership of national parties'. Given that it is the party leadership that engages in coalition bargaining, this is well-suited for the purposes of this study. Likewise, respondents are asked explicitly to estimate party positions for the duration of the year in question. The 2014 survey, for example, was administered from December 2014 to February 2015, and it asked respondents to place parties 'in the course of 2014'.

The issue of timing also relates to the question of whether expert estimates reflect intentions and preferences or behaviour. From 2002–2014, the CHES waves coincide with Swedish national elections, and in all cases they were administered shortly *after* these elections were held. This means the experts can take election manifestos into account when assigning positions; in addition, however, they can also be influenced by which coalitions are

actually formed. Budge (2000) argues that, if expert measurements are based even in part on behaviour, then they are not suitable for explaining which coalitions are formed. Müller et al. (2019) rely on expert survey estimates of party positions, but they agree that the danger of causal circularity is the central argument against using such data in the context of coalition studies.

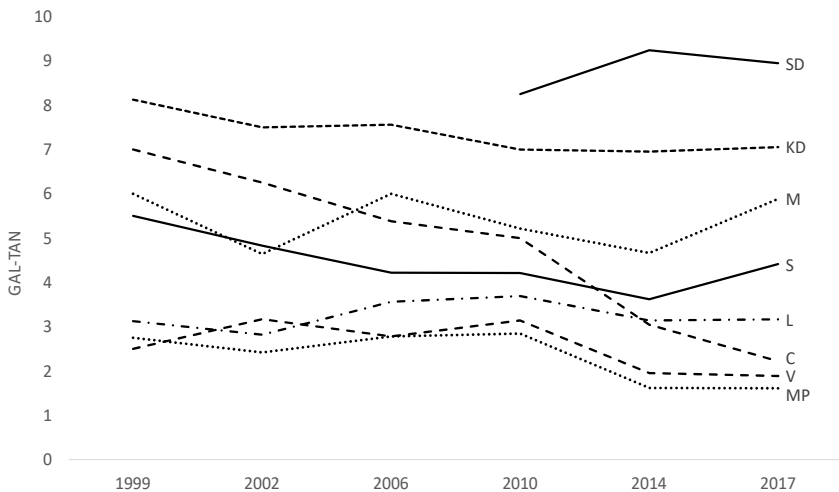
Unlike the case with manifesto data, stability is the norm for expert survey data (McDonald et al., 2007; McDonald & Mendes, 2001). As can be seen in Figure 3.4, Swedish left-right party placements from the Chapel Hill surveys are relatively stable – although not entirely static – for the 2006–2014 period. Somewhat remarkably, the four centre-right parties converge from 2002–2010, to the extent that their left-right positions are almost indistinguishable. One might be tempted to attribute this change to the formation of the Alliance, in which case drawing inferences about coalition behaviour from these data may amount to circular reasoning. However, some changes are clearly independent of actual coalition formation. For example, the Centre Party and the Liberals diverge from the other two Alliance partners in 2017 (and these estimates pre-date the 2018 election and subsequent government formation). Thus, the observation is not driven by the fact that the Centre Party and the Liberals chose to support the Social Democrats and the Greens in the Löfven II cabinet formed in January 2019.



Source: The 1999–2017 Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017).
 Notes: Party positions on the general left-right dimension, ranging from extreme left (0) to extreme right (10).

Figure 3.4. Left-right positions of Swedish parties (1999–2017)

Changes that cannot be plausibly attributed to coalition formation are even more apparent if we look at the GAL-TAN dimension, shown in Figure 3.5. For example, the Centre Party undergoes a long-term change from the culturally conservative to the culturally liberal side of the spectrum. The Social Democrats and the Moderates underwent a similar change, although a less pronounced one, which was then aborted in 2017 in favour of a more conservative stance on cultural matters. Again, these changes cannot be explained by coalition behaviour; a more plausible interpretation is that they reflect changes in party policy during this period. One policy area likely to influence these changes – immigration – is analysed in detail in chapter 6. The economic left-right dimension shows more change than the general left-right one, but less than the GAL-TAN dimension (not shown here; see Figure A.1 in the appendix).

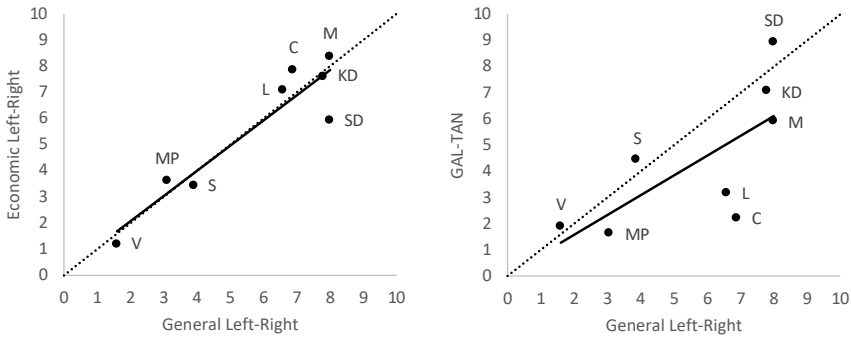


Source: The 1999–2017 Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017).
Notes: Party positions on the GAL-TAN dimension, ranging from libertarian/postmaterialist (0) to traditional/authoritarian (10).

Figure 3.5. GAL-TAN positions of Swedish parties (1999–2017)

Why, then, does the volatility of the GAL-TAN dimension and (to a lesser extent) of the economic dimension not appear to be reflected in general left-right positions? This takes us back to the question of what the criteria are for assigning parties their positions. One problem with the left-right dimension

is that it is not well-defined.³⁴ Since the concept of left-right has no secure anchor, '[e]xperts are left to determine their own individual frame of reference' (McDonald et al., 2007, p. 13). It has also been shown that experts are more biased on a vague dimension such as general left-right, and less biased on dimensions with clearer policy content, such as economic or social policy (Bauer et al., 2017; Curini, 2010). In the following, therefore, I examine the content of the general left-right position as a function of economic and GAL-TAN positions.



Source: The 2017 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Polk et al., 2017).

Figure 3.6. Party-position correlations (2017)

Correlations between the economic/GAL-TAN dimensions and the general left-right dimension are shown in Figure 3.6. For ease of presentation, only the 2017 data are shown, although the pattern is similar for 2010 and 2014.

³⁴ The instructions for coding the *general left-right dimension* are limited to the following: 'Please tick the box that best describes each party's overall ideology on a scale ranging from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right)'. The *economic dimension* ranges from extreme left (0) to extreme right (10), and is described in the Chapel Hill questionnaire as follows: 'Parties can be classified in terms of their stance on economic issues. Parties on the economic left want government to play an active role in the economy. Parties on the economic right emphasize a reduced economic role for government: privatization, lower taxes, less regulation, less government spending, and a leaner welfare state.' The *GAL-TAN dimension* ranges from libertarian/postmaterialist (0) to traditional/authoritarian, and is described in the Chapel Hill questionnaire as follows: 'Parties can be classified in terms of their views on democratic freedoms and rights. "Libertarian" or "postmaterialist" parties favor expanded personal freedoms, for example, access to abortion, active euthanasia, same-sex marriage, or greater democratic participation. "Traditional" or "authoritarian" parties often reject these ideas; they value order, tradition, and stability, and believe that the government should be a firm moral authority on social and cultural issues.'

As can be seen, the general dimension and the economic left-right dimension are strongly correlated ($r=0.93$), with most parties having close to a 1:1 match between the two dimensions (as indicated by the dotted diagonal line). The SD is something of an outlier, however, being more right-wing than we would expect from its economic position alone. On the GAL-TAN dimension, the correlation with general left-right is substantially weaker ($r=0.71$). Most notably, the Centre Party and the Liberals hold highly liberal positions on the former dimension that are not reflected in their positions on the latter. Here, the position of the Sweden Democrats is instead close to its general left-right position. The results thus suggest that, for most parties, the general left-right position is primarily a function of economic policy, except in the case of the Sweden Democrats, for whom it is mainly driven by GAL-TAN issues. It makes sense to give more weight to more salient issues, such as GAL-TAN for the Sweden Democrats; however, the results suggest the experts are not consistent in so doing. If that were the case, namely, the Centre Party and the Liberals would have more centrist positions on the general dimension.

Where the salience of the economic and GAL-TAN dimensions are concerned, the experts estimate them to be about equal (not shown here).³⁵ Nevertheless, the experts appear to give significantly more weight to the economic dimension when deriving their general left-right estimates. This claim is further supported by the results, shown in Table 3.2, of regressing economic and GAL-TAN estimates on general left-right estimates. The regression coefficients (i.e., partial correlations) in Table 3.2 show that economic estimates explain a much larger share of the variation in general left-right than does GAL-TAN.³⁶ Although the increasing effect size of GAL-TAN over the three survey waves is consistent with the increasing salience attached to this dimension as judged by the experts, it nevertheless seems that such issues are given insufficient weight in the general left-right. While one could argue about the validity of the position and salience estimates for the economic and GAL-TAN dimensions, these observations suggest a potentially more funda-

³⁵ Comparing the mean salience for the two dimensions using all 144 estimates (18 experts across 8 parties), GAL-TAN is in fact significantly more salient than the economy (7.2 vs. 6.3, at $p=0.0009$). However, if salience is weighted by party size (cf. Benoit & Laver, 2006), these differences disappear (7.0 vs. 6.6, at $p=0.28$). For 2014, the weighted (but not unweighted) mean salience of the economic dimension is significantly greater than that of GAL-TAN (7.0 vs. 5.7). Regardless of which measurement is used, then, GAL-TAN is estimated to have become more salient over time. (No salience data are available for 2010.)

³⁶ The results are robust when the observations are weighted according to party size and when expert id is controlled for (not shown here).

mental problem – namely that the construction of the general left-right is not internally consistent.

Table 3.2. OLS regression coefficients for dependent variable general left-right position

	2010	2014	2017
Economic	0.789 (0.0820)	0.765 (0.0532)	0.747 (0.0415)
GAL-TAN	0.197 (0.127)	0.265 (0.0738)	0.283 (0.0528)
Constant	0.361 (0.327)	0.392 (0.189)	0.271 (0.198)
Observations	107	167	135
R-Squared	0.754	0.838	0.864

Source: The 2010, 2014, and 2017 Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017). *Notes:* Standard errors in parentheses.

What are the implications of these findings for the analyses in this study? In chapter 6, I use CHES party positions to illustrate changes in immigration policy. Since this measurement focuses on a specific policy issue rather than on a semi-abstract and ambiguous dimension such as general left-right, I argue that the specific problem identified above does not apply. Potentially more problematic is my use of the left-right dimension when predicting coalitions in chapter 7. Drawing on the insights above, my analysis in chapter 7 does not rely on the general left-right dimension alone. I also construct an alternative measurement taking into account position and salience on both the economic and GAL-TAN scales (described in section 7.1.2). Finally, I perform a number of robustness checks for the dimensions used in chapter 7, including treating the economic and GAL-TAN dimensions as independent of each other.

3.3.3. Voter preferences

Unlike the data on party policy positions, data on voter preferences have a more limited use here. Specifically, I use them only in chapter 6, to make an argument about the congruence between party positions and voter preferences on the issue of immigration. To do so, I use two sets of time-series

survey data collected by the SOM Institute (2018) and the European Social Survey (2014). Details on how I use these survey data can be found in chapter 6.

3.3.4. Press material and interviews

Finally, the analyses in this book make extensive use of press material and, to a lesser extent, of interview material. The specific choice of material is described in more detail within each empirical chapter. In the following, however, I discuss some general considerations about the two types of material.

Each approach has its own advantages and disadvantages. Surveying press material is more resource-efficient; in interviews, however, the researcher is free to ask questions that the journalists did not, and which may be more relevant for the analysis. I believe, therefore, that the trade-off between the two approaches needs to be assessed in terms of the quantity and quality of the available press material within the context of the research problem at hand: is there enough material to answer the relevant questions, and does it correspond to the analytical categories defined by the researcher? The analysis in chapter 5, for example, draws on large quantities of press material, and I would argue that the various motives stated by party representatives correspond well to the analytical framework distinguishing between the party goals of policy, office, and votes. By contrast, I believe, the argument about reputational constraint made in chapter 6 cannot be convincingly established without showing that interviews also support it.

A related question is whether or not we should expect interviews to provide us with an account that is substantively different from that which can be inferred from statements reported in the media. In either case, we cannot know with any real certainty if party representatives have revealed their true motives. If there are incentives to misrepresent motives in public settings, these incentives may be as present in private ones (Krebs & Jackson, 2007). It is important, therefore, to pay close attention to the degree of correspondence between statements about motives and actions taken subsequently (Hadenius, 1983). When contacting MPs for interviews intended for chapter 6, I found that they were reluctant to speak about ongoing and sensitive political processes – even when offered anonymity. One problem with anonymous interviews is that their contents cannot be independently verified. In the present context, I believe, this is nonetheless justifiable, because I draw no strong conclusions based on the interview material alone. Quotes from the interviewees serve instead to illustrate conclusions that can be drawn based on other material.

Since it has been shown that newspaper editorials tend to portray the Sweden Democrats negatively (Hellström, 2016; Hellström & Lodenius, 2016), there is a potential risk of bias in media reports. Still, I would argue, this does not pose any serious problems for the research design used here. I do not rely, namely, on the accounts given by journalists, but instead on the statements made by party representatives. After all, we can reasonably expect journalists not to fabricate or misrepresent direct quotations, regardless of their political sympathies.

I would also argue that we can expect public statements about coalition formation preferences to provide reasonably accurate representations of party preferences, given that deviating from such statements involves a cost. Most notably, voters will question why parties do not form their preferred coalitions, as stated by their representatives, in the absence of obviously legitimate reasons not to do so (e.g., because they do not control enough seats). Whether or not actors convey their ‘true motivations’, their statements have real consequences (Schimmelfennig, 2001). Everything actors claim at one point creates constraints on what they can plausibly claim at a later point. Indeed, this reflects the idea of reputational constraint – one of the main theoretical premises of this book. Elster (2009, p. 20) argues, furthermore, that although ‘the benefits of misrepresentation may be considerable, the costs can be prohibitive [...] Because any given motive is embedded in a vast network of other motives and beliefs, the number of adjustments to be made in sustaining hypocrisy can be crippling’. In conclusion, I take the position set forth by O’Mahoney (2015, p. 249), to the effect that ‘misrepresentation should not be assumed but should instead be based on evidence, for example, some inconsistency between various pieces of evidence’.

Finally, a note on citation and translation. When a source is either a text penned by a party representative (e.g., a debate article) or an analysis written by a journalist, I cite the press material in question according to the convention for academic journal articles. By contrast, I cite news reports using the date and name of the publications in question, and I list them separately in the bibliography. When I quote statements found in press material or made by interviewees, all translations into English are my own unless stated otherwise. For all other sources (which are predominantly in English in the original case), the opposite principle applies.

3.4. Limitations

Before turning to the empirical chapters, I should briefly note four limitations of this study. First, the focus on a single country and/or a small number of cases means that some of my conclusions must be considered preliminary or partial. For example, I argue that the mechanism-based explanations developed in this study are likely to be useful for other cases and contexts as well. Ultimately, however, the truth of this claim can only be assessed by studying additional cases. In the concluding section, I address avenues for further cross-national studies in light of my findings.

Second, focusing as it does on mainstream party reactions to the radical right, this book pays less attention to the actions and strategies of the SD itself. The behaviour of the SD figures here largely in terms of how it sets the scene on which mainstream parties deploy their strategies. An analytical focus on the radical right is of course valuable (see e.g. Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2015; Paxton & Peace, 2020; Zaslove, 2012); due to limitations of scope, however, it does not form a central part of this study.

Third, while multi-method research designs have the potential to compensate for the weaknesses inherent in quantitative and qualitative approaches, they can also be more demanding. As Gerring (2017, p. 28) points out, '[d]oing more than one thing might mean doing multiple things poorly, by dint of limited time, space, or expertise'. It has been argued, therefore, that it is more efficient to mix methods in a division of labour across scholars (Ahmed & Sil, 2012; Gehlbach, 2015). This book has a stronger emphasis on case studies than on statistical analysis; however, inasmuch as the selection of some of my cases is guided by the statistical results, analysis of the latter kind has a crucial role to play. For this reason, a division of labour was not a possible option. I agree, however, that a division of labour across methods is a fruitful approach. Indeed, I would contend, the analysis in chapter 7 constitutes such a contribution, because the insights it supplies are tailored for further testing in future large-n studies.

Finally, this study focuses on the empirical (as opposed to normative) aspects of mainstream party reactions to the radical right. Empirical research in the social sciences does not necessarily have a normative goal, but it does typically relate to some kind of normative problem. Indeed, if this were not the case, we might be inclined to question the relevance of this particular line of research (Gerring & Yesnowitz, 2006). Radical right parties challenge aspects of liberal democracy which are normatively favoured by most other parties and by large segments of the electorate (Mudde, 2007). This party

family is sometimes referred to in scholarly research as the ‘dark side’ of European politics or the like (e.g., Zaslove, 2004b). In the present study, I do not ascribe any inherent negative or positive value to these parties. The assertion that the radical right *ought* not to be politically influential is a normative claim made by some parties, and we need of course to consider such claims when we study such parties. On the other hand, there are two questions here – ‘Under what circumstances is isolation broken?’ and ‘Is breaking isolation a bad thing?’ – that can be separated. Only questions of the former kind are addressed in this book.

4. Patterns of Coalition Formation

We start our enquiry into Swedish mainstream party reactions to the radical right with the question of how the presence of the Sweden Democrats affects patterns of coalition formation. To answer this question, I turn to the local political level – to coalition formation in Sweden’s 290 municipalities across three elections (2006, 2010 and 2014). If the mainstream parties act strategically and in accordance with coalition theory when faced with the Sweden Democrats, this should be observable not just at the national level but at the local level as well. Following Bale (2003), my main focus here is on bloc politics: how do the patterns of coalition formation change when the Sweden Democrats control the balance of power between the established left and right blocs?

Other things being equal, we can expect the parties involved in coalition bargaining to have a preference for ideologically compact majority government, because such cabinets are effective and require fewer compromises on policy. When the SD controls the balance of power, majority government has only been possible if the other parties cooperate across the bloc divide, since cooperation with the radical right is ruled out by the *cordon sanitaire*. For this reason, we can expect the presence of the Sweden Democrats to result in increased cross-bloc cooperation. However, inasmuch as the Sweden Democrats are in closer policy proximity to the right bloc than to the left bloc, we can expect them to have a preference for government by the right, even if they are not themselves included in it. Stated otherwise, the right bloc should be more likely than the left bloc to form minority governments relying on informal support from the radical right. My analysis in this chapter allows for a test of whether or not patterns of coalition formation at the local level conform to the expectations generated by coalition theory.

4.1. Analytical Framework

4.1.1. Case selection and hypotheses

I have chosen to analyse coalition formation at the local level in this chapter, because Swedish municipalities provide us with a large number of comparable cases on which we can test hypotheses about coalition formation statistically. When focusing on the local level, however, we must remember that

parties are not autonomous in their decision-making. Specifically, parties at the local level may be hierarchically constrained by the *cordon sanitaire* against the SD enforced by their national leaders. I save the question of *why* the SD has been excluded for the next chapter. It bears noting, however, that although surveys have shown substantial support among municipal politicians for cooperation between the mainstream right and the radical right (Hambraeus, 2017; Marmorstein, 2014), no such cooperation occurred during the period analysed here.

This analysis includes coalitions in all 290 municipalities following three elections (2006, 2010, and 2014), making for a total of 870 cases. I have opted for the 2006 elections as the earliest to be included, because that was when the Sweden Democrats started to become a relevant party at the local level. In the 2006 elections, the party increased the share of municipalities in which it was represented from 10% to 50%. The choice of 2014 as the last election is driven by the availability of data at the time of analysis.³⁷ These three elections span a period coinciding with exponential growth for the SD, from an average seat share of around 2% to one of about 10%. Descriptive statistics for the party at the local level are presented in Table 4.1. As the SD has grown, the number of situations where neither bloc holds a majority of seats has more than doubled.

³⁷ When the analysis in this chapter and the subsequent case studies based on these results (see chapter 5) were carried out, the 2018 election had not yet taken place. I have opted not to update this chapter with data for 2018, for several reasons. First, multiple data sources would have had to be compiled, diverting resources from other parts of the study. The collection of data on budget votes was particularly resource-demanding, and it would not have been feasible to update these data for 2018. Similarly, the small-n analysis in chapter 5 had been concluded by the time of the 2018 election, and additional cases could not be included for resource reasons. Including the 2018 election in the large-n study would therefore not have affected the mechanism-based explanation developed in chapter 5. Finally, descriptive statistics for the 2018 election (not shown here) suggest patterns similar to those for 2014: cross-bloc coalitions remain the dominant strategy when the Sweden Democrats control the balance of power, and the right bloc is more likely than the left bloc to form minority cabinets in such situations. In sum, updating this chapter with the 2018 election would have diverted resources from more crucial parts of the study, while probably not affecting my conclusions much.

Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics for the Sweden Democrats on the local level (2006–2014)

Year	Single party majority	No bloc majority situation	SD is represented	Average SD seat share
2006	18	73	144	2.1% (3.1)
2010	19	86	247	4.6% (3.6)
2014	6	164	285	10.3% (5.1)

Source: Swedish Election Authority. Notes: Sweden has a total of 290 municipalities. See text for definitions. Standard deviations in parentheses.

While the predominant pattern at the local level is for the parties to form coalitions across the bloc divide only in situations where the parliamentary numbers are difficult (Gilljam & Karlsson, 2012), political competition at this level is commonly described as more consensual and less polarised than it is at the national level (Åberg, 1998; Wänström, 2015). Depending on the policy preferences of the parties in any given municipality, some coalitions including parties from both blocs may of course be quite cohesive. I therefore start the analysis by considering the policy diversity of government coalitions as a continuous variable that does not require an assumption of competition between two political blocs (cf. Warwick, 1994, ch. 5). Since the mainstream parties value majority government, but cooperation with the SD is ruled out, we can expect the following:

H1: The SD's share of seats has a positive effect on the policy range of government coalitions.

The analysis then moves on to two hypotheses relating to bloc politics. Again, the *right bloc* is defined as the four parties belonging to the centre-right Alliance, while the *left bloc* consists of the Social Democrats, the Green Party, and the Left Party. A situation in which the SD *controls the balance of power* is one in which neither the left nor the right bloc holds a majority of seats, and where the SD's seats are enough to provide either bloc with a majority.³⁸ I restrict this definition to situations where no local party can contribute to a majority, since these are the situations where the SD is most relevant. A *local*

³⁸ Note that, strictly speaking, such a situation means only that the SD *potentially* controls the balance of power. The reason for this is that if the bloc divide is not upheld – for example because the other parties opt to form a cross-bloc majority – the SD is deprived of its pivotal position.

party here refers to any party other than the eight parties represented in the national parliament. Most local parties are represented only in a single municipality, although some are affiliated with a national party organisation. For the purposes of this analysis, local parties are considered to be unaffiliated with either bloc; thus, their inclusion in a coalition has no bearing on its classification as within-bloc or cross-bloc. This means that, when the Sweden Democrats control the balance of power, they can always in theory contribute to a majority either to the right or to the left. It also means that the parties from either bloc can form a majority by including one or more parties from the other bloc, but not by including a local party. As in Hypothesis 1 (but now in a bloc-politics context), we can expect the following:

H2: When the SD controls the balance of power between the left and right blocs, cross-bloc coalitions are more likely to form.

However, we would not expect both blocs to be equally inclined to exclude the SD through broad coalitions across the bloc divide. Since radical right parties are in closer proximity to the centre-right than to the centre-left, they are more likely to provide parliamentary support for the former in the case of minority government. In other words, they should prefer centre-right government to centre-left government, even if they are not themselves included in it. While the SD cannot be said to have provided reliable support for either bloc, it has been more favourable to the centre-right at the national level (Bäck & Bergman, 2016). Consequently, we can expect minority government by the right bloc to be more viable than minority government by the left bloc in situations where the Sweden Democrats control the balance of power. Because of these policy differences, we can expect the following:

H3: When the SD controls the balance of power, the right bloc is more likely than the left bloc to form a minority government.

4.1.2. Data and methods

The main source of empirical material for this chapter is a data set compiled by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKR 2015), which contains information about the composition of governments at the local level. The composition is coded by the parties included in the first government formed following each election. Data on seat distribution for all elections and municipalities are available from the Swedish Election Authority. I have compiled these two sources into a data set containing

government type, size, and composition. Data on policy positions are derived from the Local and Regional Councils Survey (KOLFU) conducted in 2008 and 2012 (Gilljam et al. 2010; Karlsson and Gilljam 2014), which was sent to all representatives on municipal and regional councils in Sweden.

The dependent variable for Hypothesis 1 is a continuous variable measuring the policy range of each government formed in 2006, 2010, and 2014. This range is measured as the distance from the leftmost party to the rightmost party included in the coalition. The position of each party is computed as the mean position of all its representatives in any given municipality in the KOLFU data set, on an index scale combining positions on multiple policy issues.³⁹ Consequently, each municipality is given a unique policy range for the parties in the executive. Due to limitations on data availability, this index is based only on economic policy; however, the ideologically most divisive issues at the local level also tend to be of an economic nature (Wänström, 2016).⁴⁰

The dependent variable for Hypothesis 1 is fitted in a linear regression model, with the main independent variable being the SD's share of seats. The hypothesis is tested on all cases where no single party controls a majority of seats. I also include a number of control variables: the share of seats held by local parties (where present); the absolute number of parties with representation in the municipality; and the number of parties included in the government actually formed (since a greater number of parties increases the likelihood of policy-diverse coalitions). Finally, I control for the ideological polari-

³⁹ The index is created by combining the six following survey items using principal component analysis (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.89$): (1) the public sector should be reduced; (2) income difference should be reduced; (3) municipal tax should be increased rather than cutting down on public services; (4) more of the public services should be performed by private actors; (5) individual choice in public services should be increased; (6) private schools should be encouraged. In the few instances where the policy position of a crucial party is missing, it is replaced by the average position in the data set for that party, except for local parties which are then left out. The 2008 and 2012 distances are matched with the 2006 and 2014 elections, respectively, with an average of the two applied to the 2010 elections. The policy index is scaled from 0–10, and the mean difference in positions between the two waves of data is 0.86 with a standard deviation of 0.77. Alternative ways of matching the survey data with the elections did not alter the results substantially.

⁴⁰ By contrast, most issues commonly associated with the GAL-TAN dimension (e.g., immigration, law and order, gender equality, gay rights) are matters largely decided at the national level.

sation of the municipality, measured as the ‘ideological standard deviation’ among party positions, using the policy index described above.⁴¹

The dependent variable for Hypothesis 2 indicates whether a cross-bloc coalition was formed (1) or was not formed (0) following a municipal election in 2006, 2010, or 2014. Note that cross-bloc coalitions can be either majorities or minorities, and while the SD is politically more relevant in the case of minority cross-bloc government, the concept of control over the balance of power is no longer relevant when both blocs are represented in the executive. Furthermore, cabinets of this kind will likely find it easier to secure additional parliamentary support, other things being equal. Given the focus here on cross-bloc coalitions, however, I believe we should not exclude a subset of the cases on an a priori basis; rather, we should examine whether and how they are different. I do this briefly when presenting the descriptive statistics in this chapter (section 4.2.1), and more thoroughly in the next chapter. I also perform a robustness check on the results when only cross-bloc *majority* coalitions are included.

Because the outcome in Hypothesis 2 is likely to be highly dependent on whether or not either of the two blocs controls a majority of seats, the hypotheses is tested only on the cases where neither bloc has a majority. As a robustness check, I also test an alternative model where I use the full set of cases and instead include a control variable for bloc majority. Due to the binary nature of the dependent variable, the hypothesis is tested using a logistic regression (logit) model which is fit using maximum likelihood estimation. The main independent variable is coded 1 when the Sweden Democrats control the balance of power between the two blocs. Since the sample is restricted to cases where neither bloc has a majority, the reference category for this variable (0) indicates that a local party is pivotal for reaching a majority. Note that this reference category includes cases where support from a local party could make a majority possible for either bloc (i.e., where a local party ‘controls the balance of power’), as well as cases where a local

⁴¹ The ideological standard deviation takes into account both the policy positions and the size of parties, defined as

$$\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n p_i (x_i - \bar{x})^2}$$

where p_i is party i ’s proportion of seats, x_i is its position on the policy scale, \bar{x} is the weighted mean position of parties on that scale ($\sum p_i x_i$) and the summations are over the n parties in parliament (Warwick, 1994, p. 50).

party is pivotal only for the largest bloc (in which case the SD is also necessarily pivotal for the largest bloc).

The set of local parties is admittedly a heterogeneous one, containing as it does mainstream parties, single issue-parties, neo-Nazi parties, and everything in-between.⁴² Still, there are two reasons for treating local parties as a single category. First, the large number of cases means it is not practically feasible to distinguish between local parties. Second, despite their heterogeneity, local parties are commonly included in governing coalitions. In municipalities where one or more local parties hold seats, they are part of the governing coalition in a third of cases (for the 2006–2014 period). When local parties are included in order to form majorities (or stronger minorities), they reduce the necessity for forming coalitions across the bloc divide.

Four control variables are included. First, since we have theoretical reasons to expect differences between the blocs (cf. Hypothesis 3), we need to control for this in the model. I therefore include a dummy coded 1 when the right bloc holds the ‘formation initiative’, and 0 when it is held by the left bloc. The formation initiative belongs to the bloc that controls the largest number of seats: if, namely, the larger bloc is unwilling or unable to negotiate a cross-bloc coalition, it can form a within-bloc minority cabinet that cannot be defeated by the other bloc without assistance from the Sweden Democrats. The exception to this scenario, of course, is when the smaller bloc can enlist the aid of a local party and thereby *become* the larger bloc. In the municipality of Huddinge, for example, the incumbent right bloc won one seat fewer than the left bloc in the 2014 election, but it nonetheless formed a minority cabinet with two small local parties. Taking their three seats into account, a Moderate representative concluded that ‘the Alliance has the leadership role; the red-green bloc is smaller than us’ (*Dagens Samhälle*, 2014-09-25). When coding the formation-initiative variable, therefore, I have added the seats of any local parties to the bloc in closest policy proximity.⁴³

The second control is a variable indicating whether or not a cabinet was preceded by a cross-bloc coalition. We can expect the threshold for co-

⁴² Some single-issue parties have very narrow profiles, such as Stop E4 West, a party that was dedicated to stopping the expansion of the E4 motorway in the city of Uppsala in the 1990s. The neo-Nazi Party of the Swedes has held a number of municipal seats, primarily because representatives elected on lists for the Sweden Democrats or the National Democrats have defected to that party.

⁴³ Policy proximity is computed with the index described earlier. Empirically, the within-bloc cabinets that were formed held the formation initiative 85% of the time. As a robustness check, I also test an alternative operationalisation of formation initiative that disregards local seats. Formation initiative is undefinable in 14 cases where the blocs control an equal number of seats and no local parties are represented.

operating across the bloc divide to be lower where such an arrangement has proved to work in the past (Bäck, 2003b, p. 153; Franklin & Mackie, 1983). This variable indicates whether or not a municipality was governed by a cross-bloc coalition before the relevant election. It is largely a lagged dependent variable, except in the few cases (3.7%) where a cross-bloc coalition was formed or broke down between elections. This distinction makes no substantive difference for the results presented in this chapter, but it is of great importance for choosing which individual cases to study in greater depth in the next chapter. We would not expect, of course, to find an increased probability of cross-bloc coalitions in municipalities where such coalitions did not last the entire term. However, I do not take changes in cabinet composition between elections into account when coding the dependent variable, because such data are not systematically available except for the cabinet composition preceding each election.

The third control variable measures the policy distance between the two blocs. We would expect the likelihood of cross-bloc coalitions to increase as this distance diminishes. This measurement uses the same index described earlier, and it is computed as the average position of all representatives in each municipality that belong to either bloc. This measurement is effectively weighted by the size of the component parties, given the close correspondence between the number of respondents and the size of the party in each municipality. This again accounts for local variation, as each municipality is designated a unique policy distance between its two blocs. Finally, I control for the absolute number of parties with representation in each municipality. Here we would expect a larger number of parties to have a positive effect on the formation of cross-bloc coalitions (since, other things being equal, the opportunity for such coalitions increases accordingly).

Hypothesis 3 is concerned with differences between the blocs. Accordingly, the dependent variable distinguishes between right-bloc cabinets (1), left-bloc cabinets (2), and cross-bloc coalitions (3). The hypothesis is tested on the full sample of cases, using a multinomial logit model fit with maximum likelihood estimation. The full sample is used because a restricted sample of situations where neither bloc has a majority means that the number of left-bloc and right-bloc cabinets for each election is very small, which violates even the most liberal rules of thumb for multinomial logit models (see e.g. Vittinghoff & McCulloch, 2007). The main independent variable again indicates whether or not the Sweden Democrats control the balance of power between the two blocs. When comparing left-bloc and right-bloc cabinets, this variable has positive values only in the case of minority govern-

ment, making it suitable for testing Hypothesis 3. The model includes all of the control variables used for Hypothesis 2; and, since the full sample is used, the model also includes a variable indicating whether either bloc controls a majority of seats.

Finally, in order to address more directly the theoretical expectation underlying Hypothesis 3 – that the SD is more likely to support the right than the left – I also present descriptive statistics on how the party has used its influence in cases where it controls the balance of power. Since there is no formal investiture vote at the local level (see section 3.1.4), I have focused on the most crucial vote in terms of cabinet survival: the budget vote. Using local press material and minutes from municipal councils, I collected data on the outcome of the first budget vote in each municipality where the SD controlled the balance of power and a within-bloc minority cabinet was formed. Each observation was coded into one of the four following categories: (1) the SD voted or abstained in favour of the left bloc; (2) the SD voted or abstained in favour of the right bloc; (3) a budget was negotiated across the bloc divide; and (4) the opposition abstained.⁴⁴ These categories are exhaustive and mutually exclusive. Moreover, although the SD may vote or abstain in favour of either bloc even for budgets coded in category 4, its actions are irrelevant to the outcome.

A descriptive overview of all the variables is available in Table A.1 in the appendix. The statistical models are run both on pooled samples (to increase statistical power) and on samples for the individual elections (to assess changes over time). They are estimated with robust standard errors to account for heteroscedasticity; and, in the case of the pooled samples, the standard errors are clustered by municipality in order to account for possible time-dependence across cases. Finally, the pooled samples include time dummies, in order to account for election-specific effects.

⁴⁴ The category ‘opposition abstains’ includes three cases where no budget vote took place (because the opposition refrained from proposing an alternative budget), and one case where the opposition parties put forth individual budget proposals with the explicit goal of denying the SD the ability to vote for a joint proposal that would defeat the government budget.

Table 4.2. Government outcomes when neither bloc has a majority, by bloc size and role of the SD/local party

	SD controls balance of power		Local party controls balance of power		SD/local party pivotal only for larger bloc ^a		Total	Total%
Left bloc is larger								
Left-bloc minority	14	21%	3	9%	13	24%	30	19%
Right-bloc minority	5	7%	3	9%	3	5%	11	7%
Left-bloc majority with local party	N/A		3	9%	10	18%	13	8%
Right-bloc majority with local party	N/A		11	32%	N/A		11	7%
Cross-bloc majority	31	46%	11	32%	19	35%	61	39%
Cross-bloc minority	17	25%	3	9%	10	18%	30	19%
Total	67	100%	34	100%	55	100%	156	100%
Right bloc is larger								
Left-bloc minority	0	0%	3	9%	2	4%	5	4%
Right-bloc minority	17	34%	7	22%	12	23%	36	26%
Left-bloc majority with local party	N/A		5	16%	N/A		5	4%
Right-bloc majority with local party	N/A		10	31%	17	33%	27	20%
Cross-bloc majority	26	47%	6	19%	21	40%	53	39%
Cross-bloc minority	10	19%	1	3%	0	0%	11	8%
Total	53	100%	32	100%	52	100%	137	100%
Blocs are equal size								
Left-bloc minority	1	6%	1	8%			2	7%
Right-bloc minority	4	22%	1	8%			5	17%
Left-bloc majority with local party	N/A		1	8%			1	3%
Right-bloc majority with local party	N/A		4	33%			4	13%
Cross-bloc majority	10	56%	4	33%			14	47%
Cross-bloc minority	3	17%	1	8%			4	13%
Total	18	100%	12	100%			30	100%

Source: Swedish Election Authority; SKR (2015). Notes: Including all 323 cases across the 2006, 2010, and 2014 elections where neither bloc has a majority.

^aSD and local party are both present, and the seats belonging to either of them are sufficient to help the larger bloc.

4.2. Analysis

4.2.1. Descriptive statistics

Let us begin with descriptive statistics. Table 4.2 shows cross tabulations accounting for all possible outcomes when neither bloc controls a majority of seats. These show that cross-bloc coalitions are indeed more likely when the SD controls the balance of power than they are in other situations without a bloc majority. A notable difference between the blocs is that cross-bloc *minority cabinets* are considerably more common when the left is the larger bloc. One reason for this is that cross-bloc coalitions that include all represented parties in the right bloc are twice as common as cross-bloc coalitions that include all represented parties in the left bloc – the two types accounting for 32% and 16% of all cross-bloc coalitions, respectively (not shown here). A plausible explanation for this difference is that the formation of the Alliance at the national level prior to the 2006 elections made the right bloc a more unified entity than the left bloc. Indeed, the proviso that the Alliance must remain intact is not uncommon in cross-bloc coalition bargaining at the local level. When such bargaining failed in the municipality of Gävle in the fall of 2016, for example, the leading Social Democrat said that ‘we could not have done anything differently. A cross-bloc coalition? Sure, we would like that, but that has been blocked by the demand from the other side that the entire Alliance be part of it. And that we can never accept’ (*Dagens Samhälle*, 2017-04-06).

A closer look at the composition of cross-bloc minority coalitions where the left is the larger bloc (not shown here) indicates that the Left Party is excluded from coalitions that would otherwise include all parties in the bloc in about 27 % of cases (as compared to 8% of cases with the Green Party). A plausible explanation for this result is that parties on the right are reluctant to enter a coalition with the Left Party. In the municipality of Sigtuna, for example, the parties had to settle for a minority cross-bloc coalition consisting of the Social Democrats, the Green Party, and the Liberal Party, because the Liberals ruled out any cooperation with the Left Party (*Uppsala Nya Tidning*, 2014-09-17). This to some extent mirrors the situation at the national level following the 2014 election, when the Left Party was excluded from a centre-left government partly in order to facilitate the negotiation of shifting majorities with parties from the other bloc (Bäck & Hellström, 2015). At the same time, there are several instances where the Left Party provides formal support for local-level cross-bloc minority coalitions, making them de facto majority coalitions.

Table 4.3. Government outcomes, by year

No bloc majority	2006	2010	2014
Cross-bloc coalition	40%	53%	60%
Left-bloc minority	8%	7%	15%
Right-bloc minority	11%	16%	18%
Left-bloc majority with local party	8%	8%	4%
Right-bloc majority with local party	33%	15%	3%
Number of observations	73	86	164
SD controls balance of power			
Cross-bloc coalition	46%	76%	71%
Left-bloc minority cabinet	18%	15%	9%
Right-bloc minority cabinet	36%	9%	20%
Number of observations	11	33	94

Source: Swedish Election Authority; SKR (2015). Notes: Cases where the SD controls the balance of power constitute a subset of cases where neither bloc has a majority.

Descriptive statistics for each election, shown in Table 4.3, reveal that both cross bloc-coalitions and within-bloc minority cabinets have become more common over time. By contrast, coalitions where either bloc relies on a local party to secure a majority have decreased drastically. For the right bloc in particular, minority cabinets have replaced majorities with local parties as the dominant within-bloc strategy. As the Sweden Democrats have grown stronger, it has become more difficult to form majority cabinets with local parties; for the most part, therefore, minority government has largely become the default alternative to a cross-bloc coalition. Looking at minority cabinets where the SD controls the balance of power, we find that the pattern is inconsistent over time. Overall, however, the right is more likely than the left to form such executives.

4.2.2. Multivariate analysis

Effects on the policy range of governments (H1)

Table 4.4 shows the results for Hypothesis 1, estimating linear effects on the policy range of municipal coalitions for each election.⁴⁵ As can be seen, the

⁴⁵ The results in Table 4.4 are based on a sample of all cases where no single party has a majority. Including the 43 cases of a single party majority does not change the results substantially. 86% of single party majorities are formed by the Social Democrats; 23% of single party majorities result in surplus majority coalitions.

SD's share of seats has a fairly consistent effect on the dependent variable across all three elections. The significance (i.e., robustness) of the effect increases over time, which can be explained by the increasing presence of the SD providing the model with more data. For 2014, an increase of 10 percentage points in the SD's share of seats corresponds to an increase in policy range of about 0.5 points. To put this into context, the maximum policy range in the data set is 7.8, and the largest SD share of seats in the set is just over 24%. In other words, while the size of the SD in any given municipality is far from being a strong linear predictor of the policy range of the corresponding government, there is nonetheless a substantive effect in support of Hypothesis 1 when other factors are controlled for. If we introduce a variable controlling for government coalitions across the bloc divide, the effect of the SD's share of seats is greatly reduced (and rendered insignificant) in all elections (see Table A.3 in the appendix). This suggests the SD's effect on the policy range of governments predominantly reflects patterns of cross-bloc coalition formation – a question to which we now turn.

Table 4.4. OLS regression coefficients for dependent variable policy range of government

	2006	2010	2014
SD's share of seats (%)	4.654 (2.971)	4.826** (2.454)	5.277*** (1.860)
Local party's share of seats (%)	2.377** (1.118)	0.113 (1.249)	-1.360 (1.180)
Number of parties in government	0.635*** (0.0634)	0.544*** (0.0616)	0.692*** (0.0792)
Number of parties represented	0.0077 (0.0862)	0.199*** (0.0730)	0.0860 (0.0912)
Ideological polarisation of system	0.152** (0.0758)	-0.0009 (0.0103)	-0.0436 (0.100)
Constant	-0.301 (0.619)	1.164*** (0.526)	-0.539 (0.753)
Observations	272	271	284
R-squared	0.309	0.265	0.269

Notes: Significant at ** the 0.05 level, *** the 0.01 level. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Including all cases where no single party has a majority. Max VIF = 1.38. Collinearity matrix available in Table A.2 in the appendix.

Effects on the formation of cross-bloc coalitions (H2)

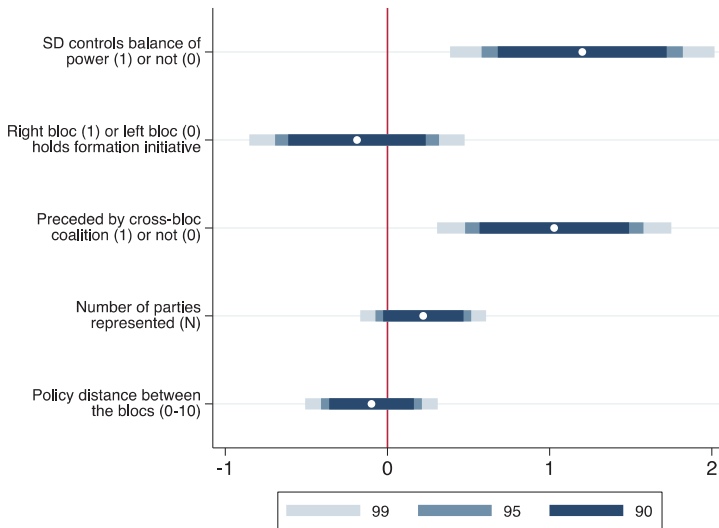
The results for Hypothesis 2 are shown in Figure 4.1, where estimated logit coefficients (log odds) for each of the variables are plotted. The results are based on a pooled sample of cases from all three elections; full results are available in the appendix (Table A.4). As hypothesised, SD control over the balance of power has a positive effect on the occurrence of cross-bloc coalitions.⁴⁶ Note as well that, since this sample includes only cases where neither bloc holds a majority of seats, the presence of the SD has an effect on cross-bloc coalition formation beyond the simple fact that it makes majority situations less likely. Similarly, since the reference category for the SD variable indicates that a local party controls the balance of power, the results show that the SD and local parties have different effects on the outcome. By including a local party in the governing coalition, the other parties become less dependent on coalitions across the bloc divide in order to form majorities.

The first control variable suggests that cross-bloc coalitions are less likely when the right bloc has the formation initiative; however, the confidence interval overlaps zero at all levels, indicating that the effect is not a robust one.⁴⁷ Note that this result does not constitute a test of Hypothesis 3, since the reference category for the dependent variable includes both minority cabinets and majority cabinets with local parties; this effect is also influenced, therefore, by the fact that the right tends to form more cabinets with local parties. As expected, the variable indicating whether or not a cabinet was preceded by a cross-bloc coalition has a strong positive effect. The variable indicating the number of parties represented and the one measuring the policy distance between the blocs both have effects in the expected directions, but these are small and insignificant.

⁴⁶ This result is robust for replacing the dependent variable with one indicating cross-bloc *majority* government only (see Model 2 in Table A.5 in the appendix). Additional tests showed no indication of significant or substantively interesting non-linearities or interaction effects (not shown here).

⁴⁷ The effect is even weaker if local parties are disregarded when formation initiative is coded, as shown by Model 3 in Table A.5 in the appendix.

4. PATTERNS OF COALITION FORMATION



Notes: Pooled data for 2006–2014. Point estimates with 99, 95, and 90% confidence intervals. Full results in Table A.4 in the appendix.

Figure 4.1. Estimated effects (log odds) on the formation of cross-bloc coalitions

Since logit coefficients are unintuitive to interpret, I also present the results for Hypothesis 2 as changes in predicted probabilities in Table 4.5. Here I also present the results for each of the elections individually.⁴⁸ For predicted probabilities, the result of a change in one independent variable depends on the magnitude of this change, as well as on the values of the other independent variables. Given that a majority of the variables used here are binary, it makes little sense to hold these constant at their means when calculating

⁴⁸ The predictive power of the model is illustrated with Nagelkerke's pseudo-R² and the c-statistic. Nagelkerke's pseudo-R² compares the log likelihood of the model with the log likelihood of a baseline model containing no predictors, and adjusts the scale of the statistic to cover the 0–1 range. The c-statistic (the area under the ROC curve) indicates the ability of the model to discriminate between positive and negative outcomes correctly. The value can be interpreted as the probability that, for any random pair of observations ($Y=0$, $Y=1$), the latter has a higher predicted probability than the former. A value of 0.5 indicates that the model performs no better than chance; 0.7 is sometimes used as a rough threshold for acceptable predictive power (Hosmer et al., 2013, p. 177). Recall also that the sample used here only includes cases where neither bloc holds a majority of seats, meaning that one large source of variation is eliminated. As a robustness test, an alternative model using the full set of cases and instead controlling for bloc majority is presented in the appendix (Model 1 in Table A.5). The unrestricted sample means that the alternative model has a higher degree of predictive power, but the results are not substantially different from those in Table 4.5 – which speaks to their robustness.

predicted probabilities; the ‘average’ case is not that meaningful (cf. Hanmer & Kalkan, 2013). Here, I present average changes in predicted probabilities (i.e., average marginal effects), where one-unit changes in one independent variable are computed for each case in the sample while holding the other independent variables at their observed values, and then averaged across all cases. For the pooled sample, the results in Table 4.5 show that, when the Sweden Democrats control the balance of power, the predicted probability that a cross-bloc coalition will form increases by about 27 percentage points (from 42 to 69 %; not shown here). Looking at the individual elections, we see that the SD had no effect on the formation of cross-bloc coalitions in 2006 – a finding consistent with those of Loxbo (2010). However, the pattern of coalition formation has changed, and there is a strong positive effect for 2010 and 2014, in line with Hypothesis 2.

Table 4.5. Average change in predicted probabilities for cross-bloc coalition when neither bloc holds a majority of seats

	2006–2014	2006	2010	2014
SD controls balance of power (1) or not (0)	0.269***	0.010	0.375***	0.264***
Right bloc (1) or left bloc (0) holds formation initiative	-0.041	-0.164	0.025	-0.013
Preceded by cross-bloc coalition (1) or not (0)	0.227***	0.237*	0.066	0.321***
Number of parties represented	0.047	0.041	0.060	0.043
Policy distance between the blocs (0–10)	-0.021	-0.031	-0.021	-0.018
Observations	309	70	81	158
Positive outcomes	162	27	41	94
SD controls balance of power	124	8	28	88
Pseudo-R2 (Nagelkerke)	0.185	0.120	0.138	0.239
C-statistic	0.720	0.699	0.670	0.753

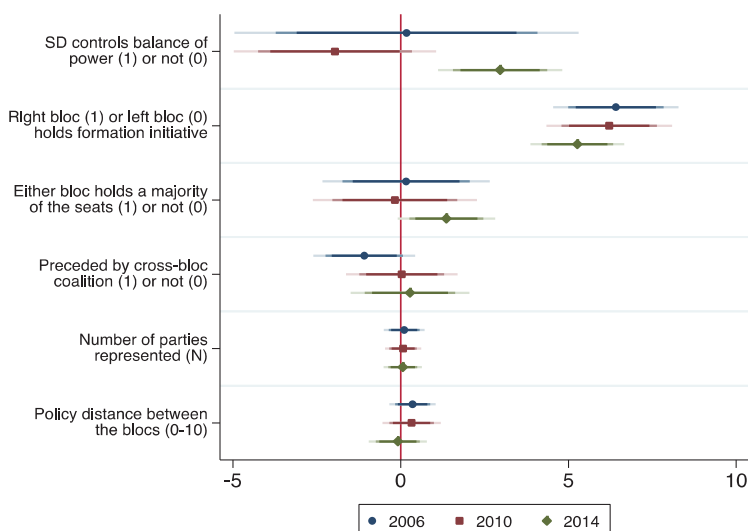
Notes: Significant at * the 0.10 level, *** the 0.01 level. Results from logistic regression (see Table A.4 in the appendix for full results). One-unit changes in a variable computed for each case in the sample, holding the other variables at their observed values, and averaged across all cases. Including all cases where neither bloc holds a majority of seats (except 14 cases where formation initiative is undefinable; see section 4.1.2).

The effect of the Sweden Democrats is strongest for 2010, where SD control over the balance of power increases the predicted probability of cross-bloc coalitions by almost 38 percentage points. The fact that the variable indicating whether or not a cabinet was preceded by a cross-bloc coalition is not significant for 2010 points to the formation of many ‘new’ cross-bloc coalitions (i.e., in municipalities governed by within-bloc cabinets before the 2010 elections). For 2014, the effect of the SD on cross-bloc coalitions is not as strong. This is partly a consequence of the fact that many of the cross-bloc coalitions formed in 2010 persisted in 2014, meaning that some of this variation is captured by this control variable. However, within-bloc minority governments also became more common relative to cross-bloc coalitions from 2010 to 2014 (cf. Table 4.3), and the SD’s effect remains weaker for 2014 even if we remove the control variable (0.298; not shown here). This suggests an increasing willingness by the mainstream parties to govern as a minority with informal support from the Sweden Democrats.

Differences between the left and right blocs (H3)

To test whether this willingness differs between the blocs, we turn to Hypothesis 3. The results are shown in Figure 4.2, plotting the effects of the independent variables on the formation of right-bloc cabinets relative to that of left-bloc cabinets (full results shown in Table A.6 in the appendix). Unsurprisingly, most of the difference between the blocs is captured by the variable indicating which bloc has the formation initiative. Nevertheless, there is an independent effect of SD control over the balance of power; however, the direction of this effect changes over time. The 2010 results show that SD control over the balance of power is more strongly related to the formation of left-bloc minority governments following this election – a result inconsistent with Hypothesis 3. This is shown by the negative effect in Figure 4.2, corresponding to a decrease in predicted probability of about 26 percentage points (not shown here). While this is a quite strong effect, it is based on a fairly small number of cases, as indicated by the wide confidence intervals. The results for 2014 are more robust and in keeping with the hypothesis, corresponding to an increase in predicted probability of about 44 percentage points. How can we explain the inconsistent directions of these effects? Recall that the theoretical rationale underlying Hypothesis 3 is that the SD is more likely to provide parliamentary support for the right than for the left. To

assess whether the validity of this expectation can help explain the results in Figure 4.2, we turn to data on the voting behaviour of the Sweden Democrats.



Notes: Point estimates with 99, 95, and 90% confidence intervals. Full results in Table A.6 in the appendix.

Figure 4.2. Estimated effects (log odds) on the formation of right-bloc minority cabinets relative to left-bloc minority cabinets

Table 4.6. Budget vote outcomes when the SD controls the balance of power

Bloc in gov.	2006		2010		2014	
	Left	Right	Left	Right	Left	Right
SD in favour of left bloc	0	3 (75%)	0	0	0	2 (11%)
SD in favour of right bloc	0	0	0	3 (100%)	4 (50%)	10 (53%)
Cross-bloc budget/opposition abstains	2 (100%)	1 (25%)	5 (100%)	0	4 (50%)	7 (37%)
Observations	2 (100%)	4 (100%)	5 (100%)	3 (100%)	8 (100%)	19 (100%)

Source: Data collected by the author, see section 4.1.2. Notes: Indicating the outcome in the first budget vote following each election. Including all 41 cases of within-bloc minority government by either the left or the right bloc in situations where the SD controls the balance of power.

Table 4.6 shows the outcomes of the first budget vote in each of the municipalities where either bloc governed as a minority and where the SD controlled the balance of power. The overall pattern is indeed that the SD is more likely to support the right than the left (17 cases against 5). While the cases are few for 2006 and 2010, the temporal trend suggests that the SD increasingly supported the right rather than the left; for 2014 the difference reaches a ratio of 7:1. The data also show that close to half of the overall votes are decided either by cross-bloc bargaining or by opposition abstention. This solution is more common in the case of minority government by the left (two thirds of cases) than the right (one third). This is not surprising, given that a minority budget proposed by the left is more likely to be defeated by the Sweden Democrats. In fact, all of the minority cabinets in Table 4.6 that the left formed in 2010 (and that underlie the unexpected negative effect in Figure 4.2) relied on cross-bloc budgets or abstention by the opposition. This suggests that an argument could be made for viewing these cabinets as cross-bloc ‘majorities in disguise’. By contrast, all of the relevant right-bloc minority cabinets formed in 2010 passed their budgets with (informal) support from the Sweden Democrats.

Looking at the 2014 elections, we see that left-bloc minority cabinets again received no support from the SD, whereas the right was supported in half of the cases. In fact, in 2014 the right bloc formed multiple minority cabinets in situations where the left bloc actually held more seats (not shown here), meaning that the right relied on active – if informal – support from the Sweden Democrats. In Skinnskatteberg, for example, the left bloc criticised the right for counting on support from the SD to take power despite holding fewer seats, while the right countered with the argument that no negotiations with the SD had taken place (*Sveriges Radio*, 2014-10-28). There are also cases where the left formed a minority cabinet but then handed the executive over to the right after its budget had been defeated by the Sweden Democrats (there are no such examples in the other direction, however). One such municipality, Gävle, is studied in more detail in the next chapter. Finally, it is interesting to note that the SD has exclusively favoured the left where this bloc does not constitute the largest minority; this may be indicative of a strategic use of its blackmail potential against the right.

In sum, the results provide mixed support for Hypothesis 3. The inconsistencies can be accounted for, however, by considering the different ways in which the left and the right govern as a minority when the Sweden Democrats control the balance of power. In the case of the left, minority governments tend to rely on cross-bloc support; in the case of the right, they tend to

rely on informal support from the SD. The results here do not allow us to infer that the shift from minority government by the left to minority government by the right shown in Figure 4.2 was caused by the voting behaviour of the Sweden Democrats. Such behaviour is, however, something to which the other parties are likely to be highly attentive when they initiate the coalition formation process. It is also a question to which we return in the next chapter.

4.3. Conclusions

The aim of this chapter has been to assess how the presence of the Sweden Democrats affects patterns of coalition formation. Saving the question of *why* the SD has been systematically excluded for the next chapter, I have focused on *how* this exclusion affects coalition formation in Swedish municipalities. As an isolated party grows, it becomes increasingly difficult for the remaining parties to form majority governments (or strong minority ones) which are also policy-cohesive. The findings in this chapter have shown that the SD's presence on municipal councils has contributed to increasing the policy diversity of local coalitions. Much of this effect can be attributed to a willingness by the other parties to form coalitions across the established bloc divide when the SD controls the balance of power.

There are, however, important differences between the blocs. The right bloc is more likely than the left bloc to form minority governments when the Sweden Democrats control the balance of power. Given that radical right parties are in closer policy proximity to the mainstream right than to the mainstream left, they have a preference for government by the right even when they are excluded from it. By presenting data on budget votes, I have shown that the Sweden Democrats are indeed much more likely to provide (informal) support for the right bloc when they have a pivotal position. Left-bloc minority cabinets are instead more dependent on negotiating support from across the bloc divide, essentially making them cross-bloc 'majorities in disguise'.

These findings give an indication of how the parties at the local level navigate the constraints imposed by a *cordon sanitaire* enforced by national party leaders, without engaging in formal cooperation with the Sweden Democrats. As such, the results are of relevance for other cases with sustained isolation of the radical right, as in Belgium, France, and Germany. National party organisations may exert pressure to install sub-national coalitions that reflect the pattern at the national level (Bäck et al., 2013), but coalition strategies can also travel the other way (Downs, 1998). Before generalising to the national

level, however, we should remember that policy-diverse coalitions may be easier to form at the local level, because much decision-making at that level concerns less ideologically controversial issues. In an unconstrained environment, the same argument could be made about cooperation with the radical right.

In order to explain the choice between cross-bloc majority coalitions and within-bloc minority cabinets, we need to consider the costs and benefits associated with each outcome. I address this in the next chapter, where I look at the process by which the Sweden Democrats are excluded from the coalition game.

5. The Process of Exclusion

In the previous chapter, I showed that the presence of the Sweden Democrats at the local level has made the other parties more willing to form coalitions across the established left-right bloc divide. What I did not – indeed could not – show with the statistical results is *why* the presence of the Sweden Democrats contributes to this outcome. As we saw in the introductory chapter, the formation of cross-bloc coalitions by the mainstream parties when they are faced with the radical right is ostensibly an indication that Sweden has ‘chosen a different path’. In this chapter, I show how the process linking the radical right to the formation of blocking coalitions can be understood in line with standard theories of party behaviour – i.e., in terms of the strategic pursuit of policy, office, and votes.

Based on the theoretical discussion in chapter 2, I consider three strategic reasons for the SD’s exclusion. First, a radical right party may be excluded because it lacks coalition potential in terms of size and policy positions. Second, a mainstream party may be inclined to cooperate with the radical right but be hierarchically constrained from so doing by its national leadership. Third, a mainstream party may be reputationally constrained from such cooperation by the costs associated with violating earlier commitments to isolate the radical right.

In this chapter, I study a smaller number of municipalities in greater depth with an eye to developing a mechanism-based explanation for the effect found in the previous chapter. The question, then, is: why does a pivotal position for the SD lead to the formation of a cross-bloc coalition? To address this question, I select cases based on criteria derived from the statistical results. First, I analyse a number of ‘pathway’ cases at a more superficial level, in order to assess the regularity of the three explanations above. Second, I perform a detailed analysis of the coalition formation process in a single municipality where a cross-bloc coalition was formed. Third, I analyse a ‘deviant’ case where the statistical model wrongly predicted the formation of a cross-bloc coalition (my aim being to find explanatory factors that can account for the failure). Finally, I present a mechanism-based explanation of the process linking X and Y, and I describe how it can be useful for analysing cases beyond those studied here.

5.1. Analytical Framework

5.1.1. Method

The analysis in this chapter relies on both deductive and inductive process tracing. To assess the empirical regularity of observable implications related to the three explanations above, I use deductive process tracing. To make a causal argument, it is not enough to show that empirical observations are consistent with a certain explanation; we also need to show that they are inconsistent with competing explanations. It is entirely possible that a cross-bloc coalition formed in a situation where the Sweden Democrats control the balance of power would have been formed even in their absence – e.g., due to idiosyncratic factors, or because the constituent parties are ideologically similar, etc. For example, the Sweden Democrats gained control of the balance of power in the municipality of Tingsryd in 2014, after which the Social Democrats and the Moderates formed a cross-bloc coalition. However, due to policy conflicts within the right bloc, the latter two parties had already been governing together since the 2010 elections, despite the right bloc's having a majority; thus, cross-bloc cooperation was already in place (*Sveriges Radio*, 2010-09-20). If we can instead establish, then, that the parties forming a cross-bloc coalition would have preferred to form majorities within their respective blocs had this been numerically possible, we will have more reason to believe that the SD's presence has played an independent causal role. Accordingly, I look for empirical evidence of the following kind:

E1: Evidence that the parties would have preferred within-bloc majority cabinets had such been possible.

Evidence of this kind could include, for example, a stated preference for a within-bloc cabinet prior to the elections, or signs of difficult negotiations between the parties in the two blocs after the elections.

Next, I look for evidence related to a lack of coalition potential. Since the SD controls the balance of power in all of the cases included here, I consider coalition potential to be fulfilled throughout in terms of *size*, and focus instead on *policy*. This is a simplification, since coalition potential depends on the specific combination of size and policy in relation to the other parties in the system. In chapter 7, I address the question of coalition potential in more rigorous terms when analysing coalition formation at the national level,

which allows for the use of superior data on policy positions.⁴⁹ In this chapter, I see the Sweden Democrats as lacking coalition potential if there is evidence that they are excluded because of policy conflict. For this reason, I look for the following evidence:

E2: Stated preference for depriving the Sweden Democrats of policy influence.

A stated preference of this kind sets the bar for inferring policy conflict quite high, but this is intentional. If a party representative has no intention of relying on support from the Sweden Democrats, such statements have no real cost, and they may have vote-seeking benefits if they make the SD less attractive to voters. For a party inclined to govern with support from the radical right, by contrast, such statements are not without cost: they harm the relationship with the SD and make it less likely to provide support at a future time. For example, the Sweden Democrats switched from backing the right bloc to backing the left bloc in the budget vote in Upplands-Bro, in order to sanction the right for having stated in the media that it would not rely on their support (*Dagens Nyheter*, 2006-12-14). In other words, setting the bar high for inferring policy conflict reduces the risk of false positives that may actually be indications of constraint. Although this does not rule out the possibility that the exclusion is driven by principle rather than by strategy, I demonstrate that the parties are prepared to grant the SD an influential position if this allows them to pursue other goals.

Turning to the two kinds of constraint, I acknowledge that a relatively superficial survey of the cases is unlikely to be a powerful method for finding relevant evidence. The most unambiguous indication of constraint would be that party representatives state explicitly that their party refrained from cooperating with the Sweden Democrats on account of either the national anti-pact or its own previous commitments. There are, of course, few incentives to make such statements. In the municipality of Vingåker, for example, the leading Moderate ‘used to advocate cooperation with the SD, but then I was scolded by the national level because there is a policy there that we should not cooperate [... .] I don’t know what I dare say now’ (*Aftonbladet*, 2014-11-08). For this reason, the constraint indicators are more loosely defined:

⁴⁹ For the national level, I rely on policy positions derived from expert surveys, as compared to positions derived from elite survey data at the local level (cf. the discussion in section 3.3.2).

E3: Evidence of hierarchical constraint.

E4: Evidence of reputational constraint.

Relevant evidence could include, for example, statements by the Sweden Democrats that they have been approached for ‘secret’ negotiations, or credible accusations from rival parties that such negotiations have taken place. Since, however, the parties have strategic incentives to misrepresent the state of affairs, such evidence is suggestive at best. I expect conclusive evidence of constraint to be rare; however, such an expectation should be verified empirically. Even so, the research design used here means that an absence of evidence for constraint constitutes weak evidence of its absence. Having carried out the empirical analysis, I address the problem of inferring constraint in more detail in section 5.2.4. I also return to the issue in later chapters of the book.

For the two cases that I study in greater detail, I turn to inductive process tracing. My reason for so doing lies in the relative lack of theoretical expectations about the specific process by which the Sweden Democrats are excluded, which results in fewer observable implications. Still, my analysis is guided by the assumption that the parties pursue a trade-off between the three goals of policy, office, and votes.

5.1.2. Case selection and material

Two kinds of cases are of particular interest in relation to my statistical model: ‘pathway cases’ and ‘deviant cases’. Pathway cases are defined here as cases where the main variable of interest (SD control over the balance of power) has the strongest explanatory power (described in more detail below). Such cases are a good place to start when we look for a hypothesised causal mechanism related to this variable (Gerring, 2007). The aim behind studying pathway cases here is twofold. First, I study a ‘medium’ number of pathway cases at a more superficial level (cf. Goertz, 2017, ch. 8), in order to assess the regularity of the four indicators above. Second, I analyse the process by which X leads to Y in more detail in order to develop a mechanism-based explanation. Here, a single pathway case is selected because it serves this purpose well.

Deviant cases are defined here as cases that the statistical model predicts will result in cross-bloc coalitions, but where such coalitions do not in fact occur. I select a single deviant case in order to find theoretically relevant factors that can explain the absence of the expected outcome, thereby helping

to refine the mechanism-based explanation. The three empirical sections of this chapter and their different characteristics are shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. Overview of the case studies

Section	Number of cases	Case type	Approach	Main aim
5.2.1	Medium-n (12 cases)	Pathway	Deductive	Regularity
5.2.2	Single case (Eslöv)	Pathway	Inductive	Mechanism
5.2.3	Single case (Gävle)	Deviant	Inductive	Mechanism

One of the advantages of a nested research design is that the selection of individual cases to be studied more in-depth can be guided by the results from the statistical analysis (Ebbinghaus, 2005; Koivu & Hinze, 2017; Rohlfing & Starke, 2013; Seawright & Gerring, 2008). My selection of pathway cases was performed in the following way. The statistical model testing Hypothesis 2 in the previous chapter was run on the pooled sample of cases, in order to predict the probability of observing a cross-bloc coalition (see Table A.4 in the appendix). The model was then run with the variable indicating whether or not the Sweden Democrats control the balance of power removed, and predicted probabilities were again computed. The difference between the two predicted probabilities for each case then indicates how much more strongly predicted a cross-bloc coalition is when we take into consideration whether or not the SD controls the balance of power (see Table 5.2 on page 126). This technique follows the logic of Gerring's (2007) pathway-case methodology, which is aimed at elucidating the mechanism underlying a known cross-case relationship by focusing on a single causal factor. To do so, one identifies cases where the outcome is strongly influenced by the variable of theoretical interest, taking all other factors into account. Whereas Gerring focuses on changes in residuals, however, the method used here focuses on changes in predicted probabilities, which I find to be more intuitive when studying a binary outcome. The two techniques yield a very similar set of cases.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ The ten most highly ranked pathway cases using a residuals approach include seven of the pathway cases studied here. Using simulations, Seawright (2016) argues that extreme-case selection on the

The approach used here also follows the ‘avoid overdetermination guideline’ suggested by Goertz (2017, p. 67), since it identifies the cases where the *added value* of the SD variable is strongest (see also Schneider & Rohlfing, 2013). In other words, a case where a cross-bloc coalition is strongly predicted by the control variables – because, for example, there is a history of cooperation across the bloc divide, and/or because the policy distance between the blocs is small – is unlikely to be identified as a pathway case if this technique is used. This is in order, since such cases are ‘muddied waters, because of the existence of multiple causal mechanisms’ (Goertz, 2017, p. 68). Beach and Pedersen (2018, pp. 852–855) advise against following such a guideline, arguing that researchers should instead isolate individual mechanisms empirically within each case. However, while that may be sound advice for in-depth analysis, such an approach is not possible for the more superficial medium-n survey of cases that I use here. To ensure robust case selection, as Rohlfing and Starke (2013) advise, I also performed the pathway procedure using the alternative statistical model including all cases and controlling for bloc majority (Model 1 in Table A.5 in the appendix). I considered the twelve cases with the highest combined rank from the two models to be robust pathway cases, and therefore chose them for the analysis.⁵¹

The choice of twelve cases rather than more or fewer is arbitrary, but not accidental. The trade-off between a larger or smaller number of cases is one between breadth and depth. Since I wish to make claims about regularity, one or two cases are clearly not sufficient. Including a large number of cases poses two problems, however. First, since the collection of data for each case is labour-intensive, there is a limit on how many cases can be examined.⁵² Second, the more cases we include (going further down the pathway ranking), the less we abide by the avoid overdetermination guideline. For the present purpose, I believe twelve cases to be about right, providing enough

main independent variable of interest outperforms the residuals approach for the purpose of identifying causal pathways in linear applications. Note, however, that extreme-case selection on X requires a continuous independent variable – e.g., the SD’s share of seats – which is an imperfect measurement of the concept being studied here. Furthermore, extreme-on-X case selection does not maximise the effect of the main independent variable of interest relative to other independent variables. In the end, the sets of cases predicted by the different approaches are similar enough that the specific choice of method is unlikely to alter the findings in this chapter substantially.

⁵¹ This robustness criterion resulted in three cases being replaced as compared to the twelve top-ranked cases based on the first model alone. The twelve robust cases are all among the twenty top-ranked cases for the first model. See Table A.7 in the appendix for details.

⁵² There are a total of 84 potential cases to choose from. When we examine a sample rather than the totality of cases (which is not feasible here), each additional case also has declining marginal utility.

variation to allow both for theoretical insights and for inferences about empirical regularity. While the decision to stop at twelve cases is arbitrary, the selection method used here – including all the robust pathway cases from top to bottom – guards against cherry-picking that may bias the findings.

The twelve selected cases are presented in Table 5.2. For these cases, knowing that the Sweden Democrats controlled the balance of power increases the predicted probability of a cross-bloc coalition by about 19–25 percentage points. In terms of characteristics, there is quite good variation among the cases. All three elections are represented, although there is only one case from 2006. This is not surprising, given that there were fewer instances of SD control over the balance of power in that election. As for cabinet composition, there is a good mix containing all eight parties and ranging from two to six coalition members, including cases with the main rivals (the Social Democrats and the Moderates). Five of the cross-bloc coalitions are minority cabinets, making them somewhat overrepresented in relation to the full set of cases (42% vs. 26%), but allowing for more robust conclusions about whether or not they differ from cross-bloc majorities. Municipalities where the left is the largest bloc are more numerous, but this is not unexpected, given the result noted in the previous chapter that the left is more dependent than the right on cross-bloc coalitions. Population in the twelve municipalities ranges from the very small (Orsa, with a population of around 7,000) to the very large (Norrköping, with a population of 135,000).⁵³ There is also geographical variation among the cases, although most are situated in the south of Sweden. Four out of the twelve municipalities are in Skåne, which is the region where the Sweden Democrats have been electorally most successful (with 19% of the vote in 2014, as compared to 12.7% nationwide). Nevertheless, seven of the 21 Swedish regions are represented.

⁵³ The median population among Swedish municipalities in 2014 was 15,325.

Table 5.2. Pathway cases

Municipality (year)	Cross-bloc coalition	Seats (total)	Largest minority	Population	Region	Predicted probabilities		
						SD= 0	SD= 1	Diff.
Karlskrona (2006)	M, C, FP, KD, MP (min)	35 (75)	Left	61,844	Blekinge	34.3 %	59.1 %	24.8%
Eslöv (2010)	M, S	27 (49)	Left	31,587	Skåne	52.3 %	75.6 %	23.4%
Orsa (2010)	M, FP, S, MP	16 (31)	Left	6,922	Dalarna	53.3 %	75.4 %	22.2%
Hässleholm (2010)	M, C, FP, KD, MP, FV ^a	32 (61)	Right	50,107	Skåne	35.9 %	57.5 %	21.6%
Tomelilla (2010)	M, S	22 (41)	Right	12,914	Skåne	35.6 %	55.9 %	20.4%
Mellerud (2014)	S, C	17 (31)	Right	8,936	Västra Götaland	42.7 %	62.9 %	20.2%
Upplands- Bro (2014)	S, C, KD, MP	23 (41)	Left	25,287	Stockholm	59.2 %	79.2 %	20.0%
Norrtälje (2014)	S, C, MP (min)	30 (61)	Left	57,568	Stockholm	59.0 %	78.4 %	19.5%
Osby (2010)	M, C, FP, KD, MP, GP ^b (min)	20 (41)	Left	12,724	Skåne	52.2 %	71.7 %	19.4%
Norrköping (2014)	S, C, FP, KD	43 (85)	Left	135,283	Östergötland	58.8 %	77.7 %	18.9%
Sundbyberg (2010)	S, MP, C, KD (min)	25 (51)	Left	38,633	Stockholm	52.0 %	70.8 %	18.8%
Håbo (2014)	M, C, FP, KD, MP (min)	18 (41)	Left	20,034	Uppsala	58.7 %	77.4 %	18.7%

Notes: Top twelve robust cases of cross-bloc coalitions where the effect of SD control over the balance of power is strongest; see Table A.7 and the text for details. Predicted probabilities from the pooled model found in Table A.4 in the appendix. ‘SD=0’ indicates the predicted probability of a cross-bloc coalition when the presence of the SD is disregarded; ‘SD=1’ when the SD’s presence is accounted for; ‘Difference’ is the difference between the two. Population as measured in the election year. (min) = minority cabinet.

^a Folkets Väl (local party)

^b Göingepartiet (local party)

The analysis of the selected cases relies on a large number of news articles reported in the local press of the relevant municipalities (for a more detailed discussion of methodological choices, see section 3.3.4). Collecting press material containing statements from relevant party representatives was done using the database *Retriever Media*, which stores full-text copies of all printed and digital media published in Sweden. The search criteria for each municipality was for an article to contain both the name of the municipality and mention of one or more parties included in the governing coalition, starting one month before the relevant election. The search results were then manually examined for articles relating to the formation of local-level coalitions, and in particular for articles where party representatives discuss the Sweden Democrats. Because of the elevated media interest that arises when the SD controls the balance of power between the two blocs, there is typically no shortage of news articles, even in smaller municipalities. Furthermore, since cross-bloc coalitions are not the norm, party representatives typically comment in the media about why such coalitions are formed.⁵⁴

5.2. Analysis

5.2.1. Medium-n pathway case analysis

Out of the twelve pathway cases in Table 5.2, I reserve Eslöv for more in-depth study, for reasons I will set out in the next section. In this section, I survey the remaining eleven cases for the four pieces of evidence described above. Again, this part of the analysis aims to turn the black box of causality into a grey one, looking for observable implications without going too deep into the cases. This grey box will be unpacked in more detail when we look at the Eslöv case. While this kind of more cursory analysis leaves out much of the process by which the outcome is generated, it allows us to assess empirical regularity in an efficient way (cf. Schimmelfennig, 2015). In the following, I briefly describe the coalition formation process in these municipalities, as reported in the local press. Based on these descriptions, I summarise the findings in terms of the four indicators in Table 5.3 on page 134. The descriptive accounts also provide a number of non-systematic insights related to the pursuit of policy, office, and votes – to which I return when developing the mechanism-based explanation in section 5.2.4.

Starting with the municipality of Orsa, we find that the left bloc won one seat more than the right but lost its majority in the 2010 election. The incum-

⁵⁴ None of the twelve coalitions included here were preceded by a cross-bloc coalition – a consequence of the selection method and the avoid overdetermination guideline.

bent executive-committee leader (a Social Democrat) commented on the situation in the following way: 'We need to reach some kind of cross-bloc solution, so that the Sweden Democrats do not control the balance of power [...] We want as many of our own policies as possible, but at the same time it's really important that we reach a majority in the council, so that the SD is isolated' (*Mora Tidning*, 2010-09-24). The second largest party, the Centre Party, was less likely to participate in a governing coalition, due to a policy conflict (about the organisation of local schools) with both the Social Democrats and the Moderates during the election campaigns (*Sveriges Radio*, 2010-11-12). After prolonged negotiations, a minimal winning cross-bloc coalition was formed, consisting of the Social Democrats, the Moderates, the Liberals, and the Greens. According to the Liberals, this constellation constituted the most policy-cohesive majority coalition, although all parties agreed its formation was a consequence of a determination to deprive the Sweden Democrats of the balance of power (*Mora Tidning*, 2010-10-27).

In Hässleholm, the incumbent right-bloc cabinet (together with a local party) lost its majority in the 2010 election. The Sweden Democrats performed very well, going from four to nine seats (out of 61). The right bloc made it clear that, since it was the largest minority, the formation initiative was in its hands. At the same time, the local Moderate leader stated already on election night that the Moderates would do everything in their power – including cooperating across the bloc divide – to grant the SD as little influence as possible (*Lokaltidningen Hässleholm*, 2010-09-20). Before the election, the Social Democrats were mentioned as a possible partner, following their close cooperation with the centre-right during the financial crisis of 2007–2008 (*Norra Skåne*, 2009-12-31). At the same time, there had been a conflict between the Green Party and the Social Democrats/Left Party over their joint budget proposal the previous year, when the Greens had sought larger tax increases (*Kristianstadsbladet*, 2009-11-26). Thus, while the Social Democrats may have seemed the more likely partner from a policy perspective, the right bloc instead formed a majority coalition with the Green Party (and a local party). The Greens presented 'a long list of demands', and negotiations were prolonged, but in the end the other parties found these policy compromises to be an acceptable price for forming a majority cabinet (*Kristianstadsbladet*, 2010-10-28). One reason the right decided on the Greens rather than the Social Democrats may have been that the former provided just enough seats for a minimal winning coalition, whereas including the latter would have made all parties but the Social Democrats and the Moderates numerically superfluous. Furthermore, the Moderates were by

far the largest party in the six-party coalition that was formed, meaning that no other party could make any strong claim for chairing the executive committee.

In the municipality of Tomelilla, the right bloc had been in power for twelve years when it came up two seats short of a majority (while still remaining the largest bloc) in the 2010 election. The right first approached the Greens, but concluded after negotiations that they demanded too much in exchange for joining the coalition (*Ystads Allehanda*, 2010-11-01). When this path to a majority failed, the Moderates instead began negotiations with the Social Democrats – an idea that ‘started out as a joke, but then became serious’ (*Ystads Allehanda*, 2012-12-11). Both parties were explicit about the need to put the ideologically most divisive issues aside for the duration of the term, arguing that this was necessary in order to neutralise the Sweden Democrats (*Ystads Allehanda*, 2010-10-17). However, the fact that a five-party coalition would have been hard to manage also appears to have been a consideration (*Ystads Allehanda*, 2012-12-11). The Social Democrats and the Moderates – who held 12 and 10 seats, respectively – managed to resolve the issue of who would chair the executive committee by adopting the unorthodox solution of alternating the position halfway through the term (*Ystads Allehanda*, 2010-10-27).

In Mellerud, the cross-bloc coalition formed in 2014 was preceded by a right-bloc minority cabinet, where the SD together with a local party controlled enough seats to decide votes between the two blocs (although they did not exercise much influence thereby). When the SD emerged with full control over the balance of power after the 2014 elections, however, the two largest parties – the Social Democrats and the Centre Party – both declared themselves open to a broad coalition in order to isolate the SD (*Trollhättans Tidning*, 2014-09-15). The Sweden Democrats were unsurprisingly critical of this coalition, emphasising that the Centre Party had campaigned for a renewed Alliance cabinet – a scenario in which the SD would have retrained its pivotal position (*Trollhättans Tidning*, 2014-11-04). However, the formation of an S+C coalition did not appear to require much in terms of policy compromise; both parties agreed that the prospects for cooperation in Mellerud were very good, with no fundamental ideological differences standing in the way (*Trollhättans Tidning*, 2014-10-08).

In the municipality of Upplands-Bro, the left bloc won one seat more than the right bloc in 2014 but was two seats short of a majority. The leading Social Democrat stated that cross-bloc cooperation was necessary, in order to reach a stable majority in the council and to prevent the Sweden Democrats from

controlling the balance of power (*Mitt i Upplands-Bro*, 2014-10-07). The Moderates, who had headed a right-bloc majority government before the 2014 elections, conceded defeat and acknowledged that, if they wanted to have any policy influence, they might have to make ideological compromises with the Social Democrats (*Mitt i Upplands-Bro*, 2014-09-23). Later, however, the leading Moderate said that no negotiations had taken place between S and M, and that ‘power always comes at a cost, and in this case it would have been too high’ (*Dagens Samhälle*, 2016-06-02). The Social Democrats instead started negotiations for a cross-bloc majority coalition with the Centre Party. For balance, however, the Centre wanted one more party from the right in the coalition, while the Left Party was deemed too radical to be included. In the end, a cross-bloc majority cabinet consisting of the Social Democrats, the Greens, the Centre Party, and the Christian Democrats was formed. According to the Social Democrats, there were some policy issues on which the parties were quite far apart, but they had found it possible to reach a common political platform where all constituent parties could achieve policy influence on their profile issues (*Mitt i Upplands-Bro*, 2014-10-07). The Christian Democrats had ‘been at war with the Social Democrats for decades’ and were surprised at the coalition invite (*Kristdemokraten*, 2016-05-18). Nevertheless, they concluded that ‘bloc politics as usual’ was no longer a viable option, nor something that the voters favoured (*Svenska Dagbladet*, 2015-10-08).

In Norrköping, the incumbent left-bloc cabinet lost its majority following the 2014 election, but remained larger than the right. Both the Moderates and the Social Democrats expressed a preference for governing within their respective blocs, but they also said they would not govern or pass budgets as a minority if this made them dependent on the SD (*Folkbladet*, 2014-09-16). Shortly after the election, the Sweden Democrats nevertheless stated that they would support the right bloc if it chose to form a minority cabinet rather than cooperating across the bloc divide, but with one important caveat: they would not support a right-bloc budget with increased immigration expenses (*Norrköpings Tidningar*, 2014-09-22). For the Sweden Democrats, a right-bloc minority cabinet would have achieved two goals. First, since they had a preference for the right, it was obviously better for the party that a right-bloc government form than that a cross-bloc government do so, other things being equal. Second, the party would have retained its pivotal position in the council – and thus its blackmail potential – which would be lost in the event of a cross-bloc coalition. The right bloc, however, was unwilling to form such a minority cabinet. According to the municipality’s top-ranking Moderate,

‘we have said throughout the election campaign that we will not cooperate with the SD. It’s a promise we have given to our voters’ (*Folkbladet*, 2014-09-22). In the end, all parties in the right bloc *except* the Moderates formed a cross-bloc majority coalition with the Social Democrats.

Turning our attention to the minority cross-bloc coalitions, we can start with Norrtälje, where the left bloc emerged as the largest minority in the 2014 election, after sixteen consecutive years of government by the right. The Moderates sought to stay in power although the bloc was smaller, but the Centre Party and the Liberals found dependence on the Sweden Democrats unacceptable (*Norrtälje Tidning*, 2014-10-06). Similarly, the Social Democrats did not want to grant the SD influence, and instead sought to negotiate a cross-bloc majority coalition. The Liberals and the Christian Democrats declined due to ideological differences, and since the Centre Party was unwilling to govern with the Left Party, the final coalition consisted of S, C, and MP. The Social Democrats acknowledged that this cabinet composition would necessitate policy compromises on the more ideological issues (*Norrtälje Tidning*, 2014-11-11). Although this cross-bloc minority did not technically isolate the Sweden Democrats, it was found to be an acceptable solution, because a centrist coalition meant the opposition was divided and unlikely to unite against the governing coalition (*Norrtälje Tidning*, 2014-10-23).

In Karlskrona, the process leading to a cross-bloc minority coalition in 2006 was quite different. The left remained the largest minority after the 2006 election, with the Social Democrats alone holding just one seat fewer than the entire right bloc. The Social Democrats expressed interest in forming a broad cross-bloc majority coalition, but the other parties were reluctant to accept the invitation. Among the parties on the right, there were fears that a broad coalition with the Social Democrats would result in even more support for the Sweden Democrats in the next election, as had been seen in the neighbouring municipality of Landskrona (*Sydöstran*, 2006-06-20). Furthermore, the dominance of the Social Democrats over twelve years of consecutive rule had caused discontent even with its former coalition partner, the Greens (*Sveriges Radio*, 2006-09-19). The Greens then entered negotiations with the Alliance instead, resulting in a cross-bloc minority coalition. According to Alliance representatives, the Social Democrats were given an opportunity to join this coalition, but no real negotiations took place. Being a larger political entity than the Social Democrats, the Alliance felt it should appoint the executive-committee chair – a move which the incumbent Social Democrats allegedly perceived as a ‘provocation’ (*Sydöstran*, 2006-09-22).

The formation of a cross-bloc minority cabinet meant the SD retained its influential position, and the leader of the governing coalition said that ‘we will simply have to put forth our proposals and see if they pass’ (*Blekinge Läns Tidning*, 2006-09-23).

In the municipality of Sundbyberg, the left bloc became the largest minority by one seat following the 2010 election. The Social Democrats immediately stated that they would do everything in their power to deny the SD political influence (*Mitt i Sundbyberg*, 2010-09-21). Cross-bloc negotiations ensued, but ideological differences made them complicated: the Social Democrats were open for cooperation with all parties except the Moderates; the Centre Party and the Christian Democrats ruled out cooperation with the Left Party; and the Liberals hoped to keep the Alliance intact (*Svenska Dagbladet*, 2010-11-24). In the end, a coalition was formed that included the Social Democrats, the Greens, the Centre Party, and the Christian Democrats. The Christian Democrats found it a difficult decision to join such a coalition, but concluded that the election results left them with little choice (*SVT ABC*, 2010-11-24). While this cabinet was one seat short of a majority, the leading Social Democrat declared that ‘we have a de facto majority. It is unlikely that the Sweden Democrats, the Left Party, the Moderates, and the Liberals will unite in opposition’ (*Dagens Samhälle*, 2010-11-24).

In Osby, the right bloc had governed together with a local party but lost its majority following the 2010 election. The Green Party won its first seats ever (while the Left Party lost all of its seats), and it was not self-evident that the Greens would be cooperating with the Social Democrats. Together, they would control the same number of seats as the right bloc and the local party – three short of a majority. The leading Social Democrat said it would be impossible to govern the municipality under such circumstances, and called for a cross-bloc coalition (*Norra Skåne*, 2010-09-20). Following negotiations, the Social Democrats and the Greens announced an intention to govern together, although they welcomed additional partners so as to reach a majority (*Norra Skåne*, 2010-10-15). They were primarily interested in the smaller centre-right parties – the Christian Democrats and the Liberals – who would jointly have provided a slim majority. KD and L were open for negotiations, but they wanted to include one of the larger parties from the right bloc for balance (*Norra Skåne*, 2010-10-16). When these negotiations failed, the Greens decided to switch sides and to form a minority coalition with the right. This was not, they explained, because the right offered a significantly better deal, but rather because they wanted to resolve the parliamentary deadlock (*Norra Skåne*, 2010-11-24).

The coalition formation process in Håbo following the 2014 elections also resulted in a cross-bloc minority cabinet; however, the SD does not appear to have played an important role there. Furthermore, this is the only case where there is no clear evidence that the parties favoured a within-bloc cabinet. During the previous term, the Moderates had initially governed with the Liberals, the Christian Democrats, and a local party – but the Liberals left this coalition due to conflicts. Throughout this term, moreover, the Moderates and the Social Democrats had repeatedly discussed the possibility of governing together (*Sveriges Radio Uppland*, 2009-05-15). After the 2010 election, the Social Democrats and the Moderates announced an intention to cooperate in order to form a strong majority, citing agreement on most of the important policy issues (*Ena-Håbo Tidningen*, 2014-10-11). Being the largest party, the Social Democrats (15 seats against the Moderates' 10) felt they should appoint the executive-committee chair (*Sveriges Radio Uppland*, 2014-10-02). Shortly thereafter, the Moderates announced they would instead be forming a minority cabinet with the other Alliance parties and the Greens. They cited an unwillingness among their members to cooperate with the Social Democrats in light of recent policy changes initiated by the national government; they failed to mention, however, that the Greens were also part of that very same national government (*Enköpings-Posten*, 2014-10-12). The Social Democrats accused the Moderates of conducting secret parallel negotiations, and hinted too at alleged talks between the Moderates and the Sweden Democrats (*Ena-Håbo Tidningen*, 2014-10-11). Being the largest party in the coalition meant that the Moderates, rather than the Social Democrats, got to appoint the executive-committee chair (the only full-time position for the parties in power). The Sweden Democrats backed the Moderates' candidate for this office, but they voted against the ruling coalition's budget only six months later, forcing it to govern on the basis of a Social Democratic budget and demonstrating the power of their pivotal position.

The findings for all of the pathway cases are summarised in Table 5.3.⁵⁵ In all cases but one (Håbo), there is evidence that the parties which formed the cross-bloc coalitions would have preferred within-bloc majority cabinets had such been possible. In Mellerud, the cross-bloc coalition did not require much in terms of policy compromise, but one of the constituent parties nonetheless campaigned for a within-bloc cabinet prior to the elections. In nine of the twelve cases, there is evidence of policy conflict with the SD. Dividing the cases into majority and minority cabinets, as in Table 5.3, re-

⁵⁵ The case of Eslöv is analysed in section 5.2.2.

veals there was explicit policy conflict in all of the majority cases, but only in two out of five minority ones. Given the indicator used here – a stated preference for depriving the Sweden Democrats of policy influence – this is perhaps not surprising, since the SD is technically not deprived of influence when a minority coalition is formed.

Table 5.3. Summary of empirical evidence

Municipality (year)	Within-bloc preference	Policy conflict	Hierarchical constraint	Reputational constraint
<i>Majority cabinets</i>				
Eslöv (2010)	X	X	X	
Orsa (2010)	X	X		
Hässleholm (2010)	X	X		
Tomelilla (2010)	X	X		
Mellerud (2014)	X	X		
Upplands-Bro (2014)	X	X		
Norrköping (2014)	X	X		X
<i>Minority cabinets</i>				
Karlskrona (2006)	X			
Norrtälje (2014)	X	X		
Osby (2010)	X			
Sundbyberg (2010)	X	X		
Håbo (2014)				

In the municipalities of Norrtälje and Sundbyberg, party representatives argued that their minority coalitions constituted *de facto* majorities, since they deemed the divided opposition unlikely to unite against the government. This is in line with Laver and Schofield's (1998, p. 81) claim that 'a minority government may be viable, given its policy package, because no coalition of the "out" parties can agree on a replacement'. For this reason, the governing parties in Norrtälje and Sundbyberg could credibly claim they were depriving the Sweden Democrats of policy influence, despite having only a minority. What, then, about the remaining minorities? While the evidence gathered here is far from conclusive, the apparent lack of strong policy conflict suggests the governing parties in these municipalities were quite happy to be (at least informally) supported by the Sweden Democrats.

Where the two types of constraint are concerned, the scarcity of empirical manifestations in Table 5.3 should be seen in relation to my expectations for

finding them – which, as acknowledged earlier, were low. I return in section 5.2.4 to the question of how we can infer constraint empirically. In Norrköping, the Moderates justified their choice not to govern with support from the SD by reference to a prior commitment not to do so – suggesting that they were to some degree reputationally constrained. The fact that the SD in Norrköping made its intention to support the right bloc explicit may actually have made it *less* likely that a right-bloc minority cabinet would form. The reason for this is that the parties in the right bloc could not (unlike in some other municipalities) plead ignorance as to how the SD would vote. Reliance on support from the Sweden Democrats may thus have appeared to voters as cooperation of the kind that had been ruled out prior to the elections, making it costly in terms of electoral support.

Evidence of hierarchical constraint, finally, can also be found in a single case – Eslöv – to which we turn now.

5.2.2. A case of coalition formation across the bloc divide

As we have seen, a pivotal position for the Sweden Democrats can lead to unexpected coalitions. In the Swedish context, things are seldom more unexpected than when an ‘unholy alliance’ is formed between the two traditional rivals: the Moderates and the Social Democrats. Coalitions including both these parties constitute only five percent of the cases; and cabinets with *only* S and M are even fewer, occurring only sixteen times out of the 870 cases of cabinet formation. One of these rare coalitions was formed in the municipality of Eslöv after the 2010 election. With the help of this case, I analyse the role of the Sweden Democrats in the coalition formation process in some detail. In addition to having produced a rare coalition, Eslöv is one of only a few municipalities where, already in 2006, a minority cabinet was formed where the Sweden Democrats controlled the balance of power between the left and right blocs. As we shall see, this previous coalition formation process is important for explaining the one in 2010, which is the one of greatest interest here. This case was also unusually well-covered in the local press, with party representatives discussing the reasoning behind their strategic decisions in considerable depth.⁵⁶

The Social Democrats have historically had a very strong position in Eslöv. In 1994 the party alone controlled a majority of seats, and until the 2006 elections it governed in majority with the help of the Left Party and the

⁵⁶ For the sake of readability, only direct quotes are referenced throughout the following section. The full list of sources for this case is presented in Table A.8 in the appendix.

Greens. The Sweden Democrats performed well in 2006, depriving the left bloc of its majority and winning control of the balance of power between the two blocs. Since the left bloc remained the larger minority, both sides agreed that the formation initiative lay with the Social Democrats. Executive-committee leader Cecilia Lind stated that she was intent on depriving the Sweden Democrats of political influence, since in her view they had been advocating openly xenophobic policies. Instead, she would attempt to negotiate support from one or more parties from the right bloc, preferably the Centre Party. For its part, the Centre was ambivalent about this proposal. On the one hand, it would be able to influence policy in its preferred direction, but on the other such cooperation would jeopardise the legitimacy of the Alliance. Having campaigned with the Alliance as a unified political entity – and having criticised the policies of the Social Democrats throughout the previous term – the Centre Party was uncertain about what mandate it had from the voters to enter such a coalition. In the end the Centre Party declined, primarily because it wanted to keep the Alliance intact. A coalition between the Social Democrats and all four Alliance parties was ruled out as well, due to fears that the SD would benefit from being ‘the only opposition party’.

So the cross-bloc negotiations failed, but the municipality still needed to be governed. The Moderates were willing to rule as a minority with its Alliance partners, but only if the left (being the larger bloc) declined. The Social Democrats decided they would, after all, attempt to form a minority cabinet. Eslöv thus became one of only six municipalities in 2006 where a within-bloc minority cabinet formed with the SD controlling the balance of power between the left and right. To prevent the SD from exercising any political influence, Lind organised a workshop with representatives from all parties to discuss how the situation could be managed. They agreed that all major political matters would be subject to cross-bloc discussions, so that the municipal council would not convene without knowing which way a vote would go. No written agreement was made, so the strategy was based on ‘a willingness to compromise from both sides’ (*Dagens Samhälle*, 2010-09-02). The Social Democrats found that this worked well during the first few years, and that they were able (although governing as a minority) to win most of the votes. Budget votes were settled either through abstention by the opposition, thereby ensuring that the SD could not decide the vote, or by negotiating budgets across the bloc divide. The leading Moderate at the time, Mikael Kourtzman, spoke of ‘responsibly passing a joint budget without

giving the Sweden Democrats the opportunity to dictate politics in Eslöv' (*Skånska Dagbladet*, 2008-05-14).

In the budget vote of 2009, the left-bloc and right-bloc budgets again differed very little. Nevertheless, the Sweden Democrats said they would be voting in favour of the right, after having been contacted by the Moderates for 'negotiations'. Kourtzman had by now been replaced by Henrik Wöhlecke, whom the SD found to be more open to discussion. Wöhlecke admitted to having contacted the Sweden Democrats to inform them about the Moderate budget proposal, but he denied any negotiations had taken place. Agreeing that his actions were liable to misinterpretation, however, he vowed not to contact the SD again. He also discussed the matter with the Moderates at the national level, who were content with Wöhlecke's assurance that there would be no further contact. Having initiated the informal agreement not to grant the SD political influence, Lind for her part was highly critical, charging Wöhlecke with being 'so intoxicated with power that he chose to ally with the Sweden Democrats' (*Norra Skåne*, 2009-11-09). Lind offered to hand executive power over to the right bloc, but the Moderates replied that they were not interested, since the left was the larger bloc and they did not want to rely on the Sweden Democrats. Despite the harsh words, however, Lind and Wöhlecke negotiated a revised joint budget which received unanimous support. The governing coalition lost only one more significant vote prior to the 2010 elections – on the highly ideological issue of home-care privatisation, where the two blocs disagreed and the SD sided with the right.

Prior to the 2010 elections, the Social Democrats stated that their preferred outcome would be a renewed left-bloc majority cabinet. If this proved not to be possible, however, they would not govern the municipality as a minority with the SD in a pivotal position for a second term, but would instead seek to form a cross-bloc coalition. The four-party Alliance aimed for a majority of its own as its plan A, having worked hard to present itself as a unified government alternative. Both the Centre Party and the Moderates held hopes of appointing the chair of the executive committee in the event of a right-bloc cabinet. The Centre Party was open to cooperation with the Social Democrats as a contingency plan, but wanted such a relationship to be based on a written agreement rather than as before an informal one, which they believed had not worked well. The Social Democrats agreed that an informal agreement would not be enough if the SD retained control of the balance of power, since it would 'influence politics in a more xenophobic direction, as we have seen in Denmark' (*Skånska Dagbladet*, 2010-09-18). For

their part, the Sweden Democrats hoped a stronger position would make the other parties more inclined to cooperate with them, although they acknowledged that such decisions were mostly taken at the national level. The party declared itself open to discussion with both blocs, but stated as well that any cooperation would come with a demand for a halt to the municipality's reception of refugees.

When the 2010 election results were in, the right bloc remained intact in terms of seats, but with large gains for the Moderates and losses for the Centre Party. The Social Democrats also performed poorly, and concluded that the voters were not content with how they had governed the municipality as a minority. The left bloc remained larger than the right bloc (by one seat), but its strength was reduced. As the other parties had feared, the SD was still in a pivotal position between the blocs. The Centre Party attributed its electoral loss to the fact that the parties had negotiated most issues across the bloc divide during the last term, making it difficult for the party to keep a clear profile in the eyes of the voters. For this reason, the Centre Party was not enthusiastic about the thought of a cross-bloc cabinet, instead being inclined to yet another term of weak minority rule. The Moderates were also sceptical initially, with Wöhlecke stating that 'I have been working hard for 1.5 years on uniting the Alliance, and that is how we contested the elections. I can't really see us splitting up the Alliance. I don't want to do that' (*Skånska Dagbladet*, 2010-09-20). In an attempt to form a coalition that would not be a majority, but would at least constitute the largest minority, the Moderates tried to convince the Greens to join the Alliance. This attempt failed, however, both because the Green Party declined and because the Centre Party did not want to govern from a minority position. Thus the right bloc remained the smaller minority, and the Moderates handed the initiative for coalition formation back to the Social Democrats.

By this time, Lind had been given a mandate by her party to find a solution that would make majority rule possible. The Greens and the Left Party, of course, were favoured partners in this regard, although Lind did not rule out sacrificing the latter in order to negotiate a coalition with parties from the right bloc. In fact, the Left Party was inclined to step aside if that was necessary to make a stable majority possible. The Christian Democrats and the Liberals held too few seats to be relevant, while the Centre Party remained unwilling to govern with the Social Democrats following its electoral defeat.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Following a recount five days after election day, the Left Party won an additional seat from the SD, after which the left bloc could have secured a majority together with the Liberals. According to the Liberals, however, they were not contacted for negotiations following this change.

The only remaining solution for a majority, then, consisted of the Social Democrats and the Moderates. Both parties held meetings with their members to discuss this unorthodox solution. There were mixed feelings within both camps about cooperating with what had historically been their main political rival, but in the end this was perceived as the only realistic option.

After a week of negotiations, the two parties announced they had reached an agreement to govern the municipality together. While emphasising their agreement on a number of important issues, both parties acknowledged that they would have to make compromises on policy. The two parties later presented a joint political platform for the coming term, although the policies to be pursued on the ideologically more divisive issues were formulated quite vaguely. The Social Democrats were the larger party (17 seats against the Moderates' 10), so Lind retained the executive-committee leadership (one of only two paid full-time commissionerships in Eslöv). The other commissionership had historically been reserved for the opposition, and it would have been filled by the Moderates had they been in opposition. Controversially, the governing coalition now laid claim to this second office as well.⁵⁸ The position was filled by Wöhlecke, who emphasised that power was being shared equally between the two parties and that the Moderates were not just a support party.

As we have seen, neither bloc was prepared to rely on support – even of the informal kind – from the Sweden Democrats. This point was made most explicitly by the Social Democrats, who argued that a pivotal position for the SD risked influencing municipal politics in a more xenophobic direction. Whether or not there had been any secret negotiations between the Moderates and the Sweden Democrats in 2009, the mere suspicion that there might have been was enough to shut this possibility down for the foreseeable future. Apart from the reaction on this matter from rival parties within the municipality, the national leadership of the Moderates made it quite clear it would have intervened had it been necessary. The account above also shows how coalition bargaining in Eslöv in 2010 was affected by the trade-off between policy, office, and votes. These are summarised in Table 5.4 for the Social Democrats and for the two parties with which they negotiated.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ The number and allocation of commissionerships in Swedish municipalities is not subject to legislation, instead being decided by the political majority. The opposition parties, unsurprisingly, were highly critical of the change.

⁵⁹ The remaining parties are not listed here because they were less relevant for the coalition formation process due to their smaller size, and because they never took part in any real bargaining.

For the Social Democrats, a majority coalition came at the cost of policy, where more compromises were needed than had been with their left-wing partners in the former minority coalition. To a lesser extent, moreover, it came at the cost of office. Because a second commissionership was introduced, the Social Democrats had to share power and prestige with their new partner in a way that had not been needed with smaller partners. The Social Democrats also had to share a larger number of minor offices heading the various committees; however, given that these bring few benefits apart from agenda-setting powers, it appears more valid to view them as policy- than as office-seeking losses. On the other hand, the party had hopes that the majority coalition would be a viable vote-seeking strategy. The Social Democrats had been dismayed by their loss of three seats in 2010, which Lind attributed to the perception among voters that the party had not performed well when governing the municipality as a minority. At the same time, the party was aware that cooperation between the two largest parties on left and right risked increasing electoral support for the Sweden Democrats. This risk was perceived as worth taking, however, given that minority government had not proven a successful electoral strategy.

Table 5.4. Trade-off between party goals in coalition bargaining in Eslöv (2010)

	Seats	Policy	Office	Votes
In power				
Social Democrats	17 (-3)	-	-	+
Moderates	10 (+2)	+	+	-
In opposition				
Centre Party	5 (-3)	-	-	+

Notes: Seat change from 2006–2010 in parentheses. Total number of seats: 49.

The exclusion of the Sweden Democrats appears to have mattered less in policy terms for the Moderates than for the Social Democrats, but securing support from the radical right was ruled out through the intervention of the national party leadership. In the coalition that was formed, the Moderates faced four years of policy compromises; in a relative sense, however, they could expect more policy influence than they would have had in opposition. Wöhlecke described the cooperation between the two parties as having ‘a distinct scent of Moderate politics’ (*Skånska Dagbladet*, 2014-08-27). The

coalition also meant modest office gains for the Moderates, trading a commissionership in opposition for one in the executive. Claiming the commissionership traditionally held by the opposition solved a dilemma that would otherwise have meant a significant office *loss* for the Moderates, being the smaller coalition partner. The great potential cost the Moderates faced, however, was in terms of votes. They had campaigned with the other Alliance parties as a unified government alternative, and there were concerns that Moderate voters would not look kindly upon the party for having left its former allies behind to govern together with the Social Democrats. The Moderates could attempt to manage this risk, for example by emphasising how much they influenced government policy in their preferred direction, but there was naturally a high degree of uncertainty as to how voters would respond in the 2014 elections.

For the Centre Party, finally, winning back votes after its heavy defeat in the 2010 elections was instead the one goal above all others. Having witnessed the difficulties with which the Social Democrats had governed during the preceding term (and the associated electoral cost), minority government was not an attractive option for the Centre Party – even if the Alliance had been able to win the Green Party over to their side, thus making it the larger bloc. Neither, however, was the Centre Party particularly comfortable with being in opposition against a minority cabinet, having attributed their own electoral losses in large part to the 2006 agreement to isolate the Sweden Democrats through cross-bloc policy bargaining. For the same reason, despite being the Social Democrats' first choice of partner for a majority coalition, the Centre Party was not keen on being in a cabinet involved in significant policy compromises. This left the Centre Party with one preferred option: opposition against a majority cabinet. In fact, the leading representative for the Centre Party explained, she encouraged her Moderate colleagues to form a stable majority with the Social Democrats. While this meant the Centre Party had to relinquish any office- or policy-seeking ambitions, it did so in hopes of a strong comeback in 2014.

Despite these differing strategies, all three parties ended up with losses in the 2014 election. The Moderates performed particularly poorly, losing more than a quarter of their voters, while the Sweden Democrats rose to claim the spot of second largest party. The Social Democrats and the Moderates had both campaigned with the goal of forming majority cabinets within their respective bloc. Soon after the results came in, however, they announced that the two-party cross-bloc coalition would stay in place for four more years.

This analysis illustrates how the presence of the Sweden Democrats played an important role in the formation of the 2010 cross-bloc coalition in Eslöv. Before pulling my findings together into a mechanism-based explanation in section 5.2.4, I turn to the deviant case.

5.2.3. A case of failed cross-bloc bargaining

My analysis so far has shown how the trade-off between different party goals can affect which parties take part in cross-bloc coalitions when the SD controls the balance of power. Of course, this trade-off can also make the parties unwilling or unable to negotiate coalitions across the bloc divide. In this section I analyse a deviant case, where we would have expected a cross-bloc coalition to be formed based on the statistical results, but where it did not. Again, the aim here is to find factors that can explain the absence of the expected outcome. In principle, all cases predicted at a >50% probability of observing a cross-bloc coalition belong in the set of deviant cases. While a higher predicted probability means we should be more surprised to observe the absence of a cross-bloc coalition, this does not necessarily mean the most highly predicted cases are the theoretically most interesting ones. Here I have chosen the case of Gävle (2014), where a cross-bloc coalition was predicted at 63%, but where the left bloc formed a within-bloc minority cabinet. More importantly, however, Gävle is one of very few cases where the right bloc later took power from the left bloc with informal support from the Sweden Democrats, despite being the smaller bloc. Finally, this case has received plenty of media attention, with party representatives commenting in detail on the coalition formation process.⁶⁰ Indeed, due to the similarity between the parliamentary situation in Gävle and that in the national parliament, there was speculation that a ‘Gävle model’ might show the way forward for coalition formation at the national level (*Dagens Nyheter*, 2016-09-24).

In Gävle, the 2014 election marked the end of an era of utter political dominance by the Social Democrats. The party had been in power there since the introduction of universal and equal suffrage in the municipal elections of 1919. Prior to the 2014 election, the Social Democrats had governed in a majority coalition together with the Greens and the Left Party. After that election, the left lost its majority although it remained the larger bloc, with the Sweden Democrats controlling the balance of power. The Social Democrats were not enthusiastic about a cross-bloc coalition, but they did

⁶⁰ Again, only direct quotes are referenced throughout the following section. The full list of sources for this case can be seen in Table A.9 in the appendix.

not rule that option out. The Moderates were not keen on such cooperation either, with their leading representative stating that ‘the most important thing for me is that we keep the Alliance together’ (*Gefle Dagblad*, 2014-09-16).

Nevertheless, the election was followed by an estimated 100 hours of cross-bloc bargaining over the course of several weeks, during which the parties were unable to reach an agreement. According to the Social Democrats, the parties on the right were being unreasonable in demanding that a cross-bloc coalition include all four Alliance parties. In their view, a new coalition demanded that the parties taking part split with their old partners. The Alliance parties found this position to be unfair, since unlike the left they had campaigned together. Furthermore, the Moderates felt the Social Democrats’ true motive was ‘to break up the Alliance in order to secure their hold on the power for a long time to come’ (*Gefle Dagblad*, 2016-10-12). As long as a united Alliance held more seats than the Social Democrats, the Moderates argued, it had a stronger claim to chair the executive committee. The right also felt the Social Democrats were not prepared to share a fair number of the remaining committee chairs. Parallel with these negotiations, moreover, the Alliance had talks with the other parties on the left. The Greens declined, because they felt they were offered too few policy concessions; and while the Left Party was more interested, the Moderates concluded that the policy diversity of such a majority government would result in internal conflicts.

In the end, both blocs announced an intention to form within-bloc minority coalitions, meaning that the Sweden Democrats would in practice be deciding between the two in the upcoming budget vote. Before the vote could take place, however, the left proposed a ‘cooperation budget’, in which they had made multiple concessions to the right. The Alliance was content with this solution, and refrained from proposing a budget of its own. The left bloc could therefore stay in power, and the Sweden Democrats were for the moment irrelevant. The leading Moderate stated that ‘[the Alliance] has never been as strong as it is now. We feel it’s a new situation where we can affect policy’ (*Arbetarbladet*, 2015-03-29). At the same time, several Alliance representatives felt the Social Democrats’ history of always being in power made them less transparent and open for negotiations than they would have wished.

The following year, the Alliance decided to present its own budget proposal, since it felt it had never been invited to take part in any proper negotiations. As a Liberal representative said during the budget debate, ‘it takes two to tango, and we have been patiently waiting to be asked to dance’

(*Arbetarbladet*, 2015-11-23). Shortly before the budget vote, the Sweden Democrats announced they intended to vote in favour of the Alliance proposal, meaning that the governing coalition would not be able to pass its budget. While local SD representatives said this decision had been taken without any discussions with the national party organisation, a precedent had been established at the national level a year earlier, whereupon the December agreement was concluded (see section 3.1.3).

In Gävle, the Sweden Democrats made it clear they were not voting in favour of the right, but rather *against* the left. These motivations were further elaborated in a press release (Carlsson, 2015; my translation):

The Sweden Democrats now choose actively to bring down the minority executive consisting of S, V, and MP, by voting in favour of the Alliance budget. First and foremost we vote against the red-green budget based on the current immigration situation, which has been created by the [national] government and which is followed through by the local red-green minority executive in Gävle [...]

In the *Riksdag*, the Moderates have started to give in on immigration policy and have presented a number of suggestions which the Sweden Democrats have been advocating for a long time. For example border controls and the latest demand that asylum migration to Sweden be stopped. These suggestions are far from enough, but they are a step in the right direction. We hope for a change of course for the Moderates in Gävle as well.

The Alliance and the SD both stated that the budget vote had not been preceded by any negotiations between the two, which would mean that the Sweden Democrats were providing unconditional support for the right. The Moderates felt the need to stress that there were no differences between the left and the right in terms of immigration policy, and that they did not intend to make concessions to the Sweden Democrats or actively to seek their support. With their budget defeated, the incumbent parties immediately announced they would be handing executive power over to the right. This surprised the Moderates, since the two budgets did not differ much. The Alliance subsequently took office, governing on the basis of its own budget.

The next year (2016), the Sweden Democrats once again provided the right bloc with unconditional support. In anticipation of the 2017 budget vote, however, the leading SD representative expressed disappointment that the Alliance had not been more open for discussion. He also made it clear that the Alliance would need to make concessions in their 2017 budget, or

the SD would abstain in favour of the left. According to the Sweden Democrats, the difference between the left and right budgets was small enough that they were indifferent as to which one would win, unless concessions were made to their demands. Among other things, the party wanted the Alliance to use its budget to signal to the national government that its immigration policies were creating problems in Gävle. The Moderates countered that they would simply govern on the basis of the opposition budget if the Sweden Democrats withdrew their support: 'They can threaten all they want, it doesn't affect us in any way' (*Arbetarbladet*, 2017-06-12).

When it came time for the budget vote, the Sweden Democrats acted on their threats and defeated the government budget. The Alliance remained in office, prompting the Social Democrats to argue that it was more interested in power than in policy. They also repeated their demand that the Alliance split up in order to make a cross-bloc coalition possible, but no such negotiations took place. The Alliance acknowledged that governing on the basis of the opposition budget meant that some reforms would have to be postponed, but it found this to be acceptable as elections were only a year away. After the 2018 elections, however, the Alliance remained the smaller bloc, and the leading representative for the Centre Party then ruled out renewed minority government because the SD 'cannot be trusted' (*Gefle Dagblad*, 2018-09-10). In the end, the Centre Party and the Liberals opted for a cross-bloc coalition with the Social Democrats and the Greens.

As in the case of Eslöv, it is clear in Gävle that the parties were balancing multiple conflicting goals in the government formation process. When negotiations for a cross-bloc coalition failed, it initially seemed the left bloc would be governing as a 'majority in disguise' with parliamentary support from the right. This appears to have failed because the left bloc did not engage in enough bargaining to secure such support. One possible explanation for this is that the Social Democrats were simply inexperienced, never having needed to rely on such support in the past. They may also have deemed it unlikely that the right bloc would be prepared to seize power with support from the SD. At the national level, after all, the previous prime minister and party leader of the Moderates, Fredrik Reinfeldt, had been adamant in refusing to grant the SD any influence (as illustrated by the December agreement, for example).

Being in opposition might have been acceptable for the Alliance in Gävle if it had been able to negotiate policy concessions from the left, but there were no real prospects for doing so. The only way to exert policy influence, then, was to propose an alternative budget. Given the similarity between the two

budgets, policy conflict does not appear to have been the main reason for why a cross-bloc coalition could not be formed. Since the parties on the right campaigned together, their strong preference for keeping the Alliance intact was likely influenced by vote-seeking considerations. The real deal-breaker, however, appears to have been the competition for office, where the Alliance felt the Social Democrats were too unwilling to share the spoils.

5.2.4. A mechanism-based explanation

In this section, I draw on the observations above to develop a mechanism-based explanation of coalition formation. The point of such an explanation is to provide an answer to a ‘why’ question: why does a pivotal position for the Sweden Democrats (X) lead to the formation of cross-bloc coalitions (Y), as shown in the statistical analysis in the previous chapter? Having studied a number of pathway cases and one deviant case in closer detail, I believe we are now in a position to answer this question. This answer comes in a short version and a long one. The short version is that, when the SD controls the balance of power between the blocs, the mainstream parties tend to form cross-bloc coalitions because they are unwilling to cooperate with the SD due to policy conflict, and because they find minority government to be too costly.

The purpose of this section is to develop the long answer. In so doing, I specify a mechanism in terms of four different parts (actors engaged in activities) that link X and Y, as shown in Table 5.5. Recall from chapter 3 that any part of a mechanism can also be considered a mechanism; it all depends on the analytical focus. The mechanism should provide us with the means to understand how and why certain actions or outcomes came about, at a level of abstraction that allows it to travel to other cases and contexts. Although Table 5.5 illustrates how X leads to a single Y (a cross-bloc coalition), we can also use the mechanism to account for other outcomes by identifying the absence of parts, as described below. Note also that, with suitable modifications, the mechanism may be applicable beyond contexts characterised by bloc politics, although that is the focus here.

Table 5.5. A mechanism of coalition formation in the presence of the radical right

X	<i>Radical right party controls the balance of power between the blocs</i>
Part 1	Mainstream parties have a preference for within-bloc government
Part 2	Mainstream parties refrain from cooperating with the radical right due to either a <i>lack of coalition potential</i> or due to <i>constraint</i>
Part 3	Mainstream parties anticipate high costs of governing as a within-bloc minority cabinet
Part 4	Mainstream parties pursue cost-reduction strategies to the extent that cross-bloc majority costs < within-bloc minority costs
Y	<i>Mainstream parties form a coalition across the bloc divide</i>

The mechanism represents a simplification of the coalition formation process in two ways. First, it treats ‘mainstream parties’ as a single actor, whereas in reality, the formation of a coalition government depends on the choices of multiple parties that may have different preferences. Table 5.5 should thus be understood as referring to a process whereby a sufficient number of parties converge on a shared strategy. Second, specifying the process as a series of discrete parts is also a simplification, since in practice the strategic decisions to which these parts refer interact in complex ways. Nevertheless, separating the parts analytically enables us to focus our attention on a few key aspects of the process, and it allows for a parsimonious and portable explanation.

Part 1 of the mechanism can be described as an initial condition necessary for the presence of the Sweden Democrats to be causally effective: that the mainstream parties within each bloc actually have a preference for within-bloc government. This may not always be the case, if for example a cross-bloc coalition is more policy-cohesive or because of some conflict between the parties within either bloc. If the parties have a preference for a cross-bloc coalition even in the absence of the SD, its presence can play no independent causal role: the outcome will be the same, but with the independent variable

specified in Table 5.5 being irrelevant. Empirically, I have found evidence that part 1 of the mechanism was in place in all pathway cases but one.

In part 2 of the mechanism, the mainstream parties refrain from cooperation with the radical right *either* due to a lack of coalition potential *or* due to constraint. Note that these factors are mutually exclusive for any given party in the coalition, but that they may differ between parties. Since I have analysed cases where the Sweden Democrats are relevant in the sense of controlling the balance of power, I have measured a lack of coalition potential in terms of policy conflict. The cases analysed above include many examples where parties cited policy reasons for excluding the Sweden Democrats – where, despite the pivotal position held by the radical right, it was too deviant in terms of policy. By contrast, I have found few instances of explicit constraint. In Eslöv, the Moderates allegedly engaged in budget negotiations with the SD, whereupon their national leaders intervened. After such intervention – or in anticipation of such – the formation of a within-bloc minority government can be difficult, inasmuch as it may appear to rely on support (however informal) from a party with which cooperation has been explicitly proscribed. This also shows how motives for excluding the radical right can differ between parties in a governing coalition: for the Social Democrats in Eslöv, policy was important; for the Moderates, hierarchical constraint may have mattered more.

If the threat of sanctions loses its credibility, hierarchical constraint loses its efficacy. At the time of writing, no party had explicitly revoked its ban on cooperation with the SD at the local level. Following the 2018 election, however, this policy was not enforced strongly by national party leaders.⁶¹ For example, in the municipality of Sölvesborg (not included here), the Moderates and the Christian Democrats were criticised by their respective national leaderships for forming a coalition with the Sweden Democrats in late 2018 – but no sanctions were imposed. In fact, the party secretary of the Christian Democrats emphasised the autonomy of the local level, stating that ‘the decision is in the hands of the members in Sölvesborg, and as much as I deplore it I cannot change it’ (SVT *Nyheter*, 2018-10-24).

For a constraint to have causal efficacy, there must be a motivation to violate it. Due to the costs associated with publicly stating an intention to violate the national anti-pact, constraint may be difficult to establish empirically. In the twelve pathway cases included here, evidence of hierarchical

⁶¹ At the time of writing, the Sweden Democrats were included in governing coalitions in four municipalities (Bromölla, Hörby, Svalöv, and Sölvesborg).

constraint was found only in the one case that was studied in greater depth (Eslöv). Nevertheless, the absence of formal cooperation with the SD in a context where a substantial share of the mainstream-right elite favours such cooperation (Hambraeus, 2017; Marmorstein, 2014) makes the presence of hierarchical constraint highly plausible, even if it does not lend itself well to empirical observation. This conjecture is further supported by the formation of a (small) number of coalitions with the Sweden Democrats after the 2018 elections, when the threat of sanctions from the national level became weaker. In other words, although it may be difficult to establish the presence of constraint in any given case, we can infer at the aggregate level that hierarchical constraint is likely to be a factor affecting coalition formation in at least some municipalities. In the case of reputational constraint, on the other hand, we cannot make the same kind of argument. In the next chapter, I assess the empirical plausibility of that constraint.

The last two parts of the mechanism both concern the trade-off between different party goals. Somewhat trivially, they imply that mainstream parties will opt for a cross-bloc majority when they judge the costs of so doing to be smaller than those that come with governing as a minority. Less trivially, we can identify what these costs are and how the parties can affect them. In part 3, the mainstream parties anticipate high costs of governing as a minority. These costs are caused by the uncertainty arising from the lack of support from a parliamentary majority, and they are largely a function of the strength of the SD's blackmail potential and how it is used. The SD has less blackmail potential if the minority cabinet controls more seats than do the (non-SD) opposition parties, because such a cabinet does not require active support from the SD to win votes in the face of opposition from the other parties. The SD also has less blackmail potential in situations where the opposition is divided, and thus unlikely to join forces against the government. In short, cabinets that command a plurality and which face a divided opposition are the least vulnerable to blackmail by the SD; minority cabinets that rely on active support are the most.

Still, blackmail potential does not necessarily translate into actual blackmail. If, for example, the SD prefers the policies of the right bloc to those of the left bloc, it may support the former without demanding concessions. The main rationale for the SD to pledge unconditional support (i.e., to support the 'lesser evil') is indeed to encourage the formation of a minority cabinet that provides a more attractive policy package than a cross-bloc majority would. Such behaviour is exemplified by the 2015 budget vote in Gävle, where the Sweden Democrats provided unconditional support for the lesser

evil; in this case, the absence of uncertainty meant that part 3 of the mechanism ‘failed’. If such support remains predictable, all is well for the governing minority. However, if the SD believes it is in a position to make credible threats to withdraw its support, it may prefer to vote against its own policy interests in the short term, in the expectation of being able to coerce the governing coalition into greater policy concessions in the long term.

Governing in such a situation has obvious policy costs, since the minority cabinet cannot predictably win votes, and the policy output risks being shifted away from its preferences. There may also be vote-seeking costs if the cabinet appears weak and ineffective. Gävle again serves as an example, where the Centre Party and the Liberals, having experienced the costs of governing as a minority, opted instead for a cross-bloc coalition following the 2018 election. In Eslöv in 2006, the left-bloc minority cabinet initially resembled a majority government in disguise; later in the term, however, it met with difficulty securing sufficient parliamentary support. With reference to both the electoral costs of being perceived as ineffective and the policy costs of granting the Sweden Democrats blackmail potential, the Social Democrats chose the cross-bloc option.

Part 4 of the mechanism, finally, relates to the cost of governing as a within-bloc minority *relative* to the cost of forming a cross-bloc coalition. The parties have little influence over the former, because they cannot negotiate with the Sweden Democrats without violating the anti-pact. For cross-bloc coalitions, by contrast, the parties can make use of different cost-reduction strategies. The relative cost also depends on the ideological profile of any given party – being the smallest for centrist parties, which can enter a cross-bloc coalition without great policy compromise.⁶² By contrast, if a party is perceived as straying too far from its ideological core, it may be punished by its voters in subsequent elections, making a within-bloc minority cabinet a more attractive option. This difference in relative cost may explain why, in Gävle, the Moderates and the Christian Democrats favoured a continued minority cabinet after the 2018 elections, while the Centre Party and the Liberals opted for a cross-bloc coalition.

In several of the cross-bloc coalitions studied here, party representatives acknowledged that policy compromises had to be made, while also arguing

⁶² While coalitions as such imply that parties must accept deviations from their preferred policy positions, such compromises are more likely in cross-bloc coalitions, since these are on average more policy-diverse than within-bloc coalitions are. Measured on the 0–10 policy scale described in the previous chapter, the 515 instances of within-bloc coalitions have an average policy range of 2.2; the 264 cross-bloc coalitions have an average range of 4.2 (excluding 91 cases of single-party cabinets).

that the cabinets were nonetheless fairly cohesive. This likely reflects a trade-off between two vote-seeking goals: legitimising cooperation with a party from the other bloc ('we're not so far apart after all'), and maintaining a distinct ideological profile ('compromises will be necessary on certain issues'). The parties that formed a cross-bloc coalition in Upplands-Bro, for example, were careful to negotiate a political platform where all constituent parties could point to influence on their profile issues. Such a solution requires that the salience of policy issues vary across the parties in the coalition, so that they can make concessions on secondary issues in order to score wins on more important ones. An alternative strategy is to put the ideologically most divisive issues aside until the next election (Tomelilla); however, this may also be ruled out due to fears that it could benefit the SD by making it 'the only opposition party' (Karlskrona). Another vote-seeking problem for the parties concerns pre-electoral alliances. In several of the municipalities studied here, the parties in the right bloc contested the elections more or less jointly as 'the Alliance'. In such cases, there is likely to be an expectation among voters that this proto-coalition will be kept intact following the elections. In Gävle, for example, the requirement that any cross-bloc coalition include all of the Alliance parties made it difficult actually to form one.⁶³

When it comes to office-seeking motivations, the empirical findings have revealed one recurrent obstacle to cross-bloc coalitions. Within each bloc, it is often clear which party will appoint the chair of the executive committee; in a cross-bloc coalition, on the other hand, this may result in conflict. For example, the Moderates usually hold the most seats in the right bloc; in four out of five municipalities, however, the Social Democrats hold the most seats in absolute terms. The problem is well illustrated by the argument made in Gävle that the Alliance – as a unified entity controlling more seats than the Social Democrats – had a stronger claim to the executive-committee leadership. This problem may be exacerbated by the fact that, in smaller municipalities, there may be few (perhaps only one) offices of real value, making it impossible to achieve anything close to proportional portfolio allocation (i.e., to conform to 'Gamson's Law'). In national parliaments, it has been shown,

⁶³ With regards to the statistical model, I expect some of this variation to be captured by the variable indicating whether or not a cabinet was preceded by a cross-bloc coalition. In cases where there had been a cross-bloc coalition, neither bloc is likely to constitute a highly unified political entity. However, there are of course differences in how unified the blocs are even among municipalities with persistent within-bloc minority government. To the extent this can be measured, it is possible the statistical model can be improved.

an increase in the number of cabinet parties often leads to an increase in the number of portfolios (Verzichelli, 2008), indicating that portfolio allocation is not necessarily a zero-sum game. At the local level, however, it is not so straightforward a matter to ‘increase the size of the pie’, since it may be difficult in a municipality of modest size to justify an additional commissionership.

We have seen examples in this chapter of how parties can find creative solutions to this problem: in Eslöv by shifting control of a second commissionership from the opposition to the governing coalition; in Tomelilla by alternating the position of executive-committee leader between the two governing parties. In Håbo, Karlskrona, and Gävle, however, office-seeking conflicts of this kind appear to have been an obstacle to the formation of cross-bloc majority governments. This finding can be formulated as the probabilistic hypothesis that *cross-bloc coalitions are less likely to form when office benefits are scarce*, and it could be operationalised using data on the number of commissionerships in Swedish municipalities.

5.3. Conclusions

In this chapter, I have developed a mechanism-based explanation for why the presence of the Sweden Democrats leads to the formation of coalitions across the established left-right bloc divide. The empirical examples here rely on a logic of bloc politics, but the mechanism has more general relevance for our understanding of blocking coalitions in situations where established patterns of government would otherwise result in a blackmail position for the radical right. My conclusions are in line with the argument that coalition formation in the presence of radical right parties can be explained by standard coalition theory, as long as we consider the relevant constraints. In short, when the SD controls the balance of power, the other parties tend to form cross-bloc coalitions because cooperation with the Sweden Democrats is ruled out due to policy conflict (i.e., a lack of coalition potential), and because of the high costs associated with governing as a minority.

Minority government is costly in terms of policy, because it gives the SD blackmail potential, as well as in terms of votes, if the use of this blackmail potential makes the cabinet appear weak. These costs apply even to parties for which cooperation with the Sweden Democrats is not ruled out due to policy conflict, if such parties are hierarchically constrained by their leaders from negotiating for support from that quarter. In the case of cross-bloc coalitions, by contrast, the parties can instead pursue cost-reduction stra-

tegies. These include negotiating policy programmes where all of the constituent parties receive policy pay-offs on their (ideally non-overlapping) profile issues, and alternating or increasing the number of office rewards to enable a fair distribution among the parties. The pursuit of such strategies need not be successful, however: in the cases studied here, the competition for office in a political context where such rewards are scarce (the local level) was found to be an important factor working against the formation of cross-bloc majority cabinets.

The mechanism identified here focuses on a few key parts of the coalition formation process, and it is formulated at a level of abstraction intended to make it applicable to other cases and contexts. In this mechanism, the exclusion of the radical right is driven by either a lack of coalition potential or by constraint. Empirically, I have found strong support for the former. The latter may be difficult to establish empirically, since stating a preference for cooperation with the Sweden Democrats comes at a cost but with no clear benefits. I have argued that hierarchical constraint can be inferred at the aggregate level from the fact that surveys have shown substantial support among municipal mainstream-right elites for cooperating with the Sweden Democrats, while the actual instances of such cooperation remain exceedingly few. In the case of reputational constraint, however, we cannot make this kind of argument.

In chapter 7, I make use of the mechanism identified here to explain the formation of government coalitions at the national level. Before so doing, however, I first demonstrate that reputational constraint is not just a theoretically plausible mechanism; it is also one for which we can find empirical manifestations. To demonstrate this, I turn now to the electoral arena.

6. Interacting Strategies and Reputational Constraint

In the previous chapter, I showed that the formation of cross-bloc coalitions that exclude the Sweden Democrats at the local level can be understood as a strategic response based on the pursuit of policy, office, and votes. In so doing, I developed a mechanism-based explanation where the exclusion of the Sweden Democrats is driven either by a lack of coalition potential or by constraint. At the local level, parties can be hierarchically constrained by their national leaders from cooperating with the radical right. If constraint can only be hierarchical, the mechanism would appear to be unsuited to explaining coalition formation at the national level. In this chapter I argue that, although there is no hierarchical constraint at the national level, the choice of party strategy can still be constrained. The focus here is on *reputational constraint*: when parties commit to a certain strategy (e.g., to isolate the radical right), they may find there are costs entailed in adopting a different strategy later. Stated otherwise, parties need to act in a consistent manner in order to appear trustworthy. A party that flip-flops between different strategies appears unprincipled and opportunistic, and in so doing risks being punished by voters.

My aim of this chapter is to establish empirically that mainstream parties in Sweden have been reputationally constrained in their choice of strategy vis-à-vis the Sweden Democrats. To do this, I turn to party behaviour in the electoral arena, where I analyse both issue-based strategies (policy adaptation) and non-issue-based strategies (e.g., anti-pacts). Both kinds of electoral strategy interact with parliamentary strategy. First, the choice of policy positions in the electoral arena becomes a crucial parameter for coalition formation. Second, although parties form anti-pacts as an electoral strategy intended to make a certain party less attractive to voters, the commitment to non-cooperation later becomes a constraint in terms of coalition bargaining. I also argue in this chapter that issue-based and non-issue-based strategies interact *within* the electoral arena. Specifically, I contend that the choice to pursue the strategy of a *cordon sanitaire* against the Sweden Democrats severely constrained the choice of policy positions open to the mainstream parties.

To make this argument, I analyse the puzzling policy changes of the mainstream parties when faced with competition from the Sweden Democrats. In

the 2010 election, the SD won 5.7% of the national vote, clearing the 4% threshold to enter parliament. Then, in the 2014 election, the party's share of votes more than doubled, coming in at 12.9%. Yet, despite the electoral threat, no mainstream party up to that point co-opted the restrictive immigration policies of the Sweden Democrats. In fact, the other parties all converged instead on liberal immigration policies towards the opposite pole to that favoured by the Sweden Democrats, making the Swedish case an outlier in a European context characterised by 'contagion of the right'. Sweden has also been deviant in terms of the spatial theory of electoral party competition proposed by Bonnie Meguid (2005, 2008); there is no scenario in Meguid's theory, namely, where mainstream parties diverge jointly from the policy positions of the radical right.

In this chapter, I first consider four alternative explanations for the convergence on liberal immigration policies. These derive from the pursuit of policy, office, and votes by the parties in question. I find that none of these explanation can fully account for all of the observed party behaviour. I go on to argue that, if we are to explain the Swedish case, we need to consider how issue-based strategies (policy adaptation) and non-issue-based strategies (e.g., a *cordon sanitaire*) interact with each other. In short, I argue that the mainstream parties pursued the strategy of a *cordon sanitaire* with the aim of making the SD less attractive to voters, and that their commitment to isolating it made it costly for them to adopt – or even retain – policy positions proximate to those of that party. Stated otherwise, these parties' choice of policy position was reputationally constrained by their earlier commitment to the *cordon sanitaire*.

6.1. Analytical Framework

6.1.1. Case selection and method

The analysis in this chapter focuses on changes in the immigration policies favoured by the mainstream parties in Sweden. I make use of observations pre-dating the electoral relevance of the Sweden Democrats, most notably in connection with the brief parliamentary interlude of New Democracy in the 1990s; however, my main focus is on the 2010–2015 period. The reason for this focus, as noted above, is that the behaviour of the mainstream parties in Sweden during much of this period is deviant, both theoretically and comparatively speaking. When the SD entered parliament in 2010, no mainstream party responded by attempting to co-opt its policies; instead, by the time the 2014 election took place, the mainstream parties had collectively

converged on liberal immigration policies opposite to those favoured by the Sweden Democrats.

Of course, we would not expect *all* parties in the Swedish system to have an interest in co-opting the policies of the Sweden Democrats. Rather, that should be true only of those parties that pursue certain goals. Vote-seeking behaviour is most clearly linked with policy co-optation, since the strongest incentive to pursue such a strategy should be found among parties for which voters would perhaps cast their ballot were it not for the presence of a challenger party. In the Swedish case, for example, we would expect the Moderate Party to try to co-opt the policies of the Sweden Democrats, since its voters have, as we shall see, quite restrictive preferences on the issue of immigration. Conversely, a party like the Left Party lacks a vote-seeking incentive to engage in such policy co-optation, because it is likely to lose very few voters to the Sweden Democrats. The party goal that most clearly works against policy co-optation is instead that of policy-seeking. If a party's preferred policies are ideology-driven, they should not be affected by the policy positions of other parties (or by the extent to which these attract voters). At the same time, the parties in closest ideological proximity to a challenger party are those for which the trade-off between vote-seeking and policy-seeking has the lowest cost. Typically, these would be mainstream conservative parties, such as the Moderates in Sweden (cf. Bale, 2003).

In the empirical literature, the consensus for liberal immigration policy among mainstream Swedish parties (including the Moderates) has been explained by reference to such ideological (policy-seeking) motivations (Bucken-Knapp et al., 2014, p. 2014; Kiiskinen & Saveljeff, 2010; Spehar et al., 2011). Others have instead pointed to the (office-seeking) need for policy coherence among potential coalition partners (Green-Pedersen & Krogstrup, 2008). In order to present voters with a credible coalition, the argument goes, parties may need to drop some policy demands that they would be inclined to pursue if campaigning on their own. Where vote-seeking motivations are concerned, the empirical literature has primarily focused on the absence of competition on the immigration issue that long characterised Swedish politics. Following Meguid (2008), Dahlström and Esaiasson (2013) argue that the collective dismissal of the immigration issue from political competition in Sweden can be explained as a strategic choice aimed at hindering the electoral success of anti-immigrant parties. Odmalm (2011), meanwhile, argues that the Swedish parties have been reluctant to politicise issues that draw attention away from their electoral priorities and core competencies. Although Fryklund and Saveljeff (2019) address the Moderate adoption of an

accommodative strategy during the 2014–2018 period, they do not acknowledge that the preceding electoral term was characterised by an adversarial approach; the behaviour of the Moderates during the 2010–2014 period is dismissed as ‘an exception’ (Fryklund & Saveljeff, 2019, p. 55).

Table 6.1. Alternative explanations for policy change

Goal	Explanation
Policy-seeking	New policy direction developed from party’s own ideology
Office-seeking	The need to conform to policies of current or intended coalition partners
Vote-seeking	(1) Voter demand (2) Relative vote-maximisation

There are two theoretically plausible vote-seeking explanations for the mainstream parties’ convergence on liberal immigration policies in Sweden. The first is simply that there was a demand among voters for such policies, and that the parties met this demand (cf. Adams et al., 2004). The second is more complex, and it relates to Meguid’s (2008) argument about relative vote-maximisation. According to this view, a mainstream party may choose an adversarial strategy vis-à-vis a radical right party with an eye to boosting that party’s electoral support – the purpose being to hurt a mainstream rival which has engaged in policy co-optation (Meguid, 2008, p. 33; see also section 2.3.1). If parties are relative vote-maximisers, ‘an adversarial strategy may be the best option even in the case in which few voters are located toward that opposite pole’ (Meguid, 2008, p. 102).

As seen in Table 6.1, then, we have four alternative explanations for why mainstream parties in Sweden converged on liberal immigration policies. These relate to their pursuit of the three party goals of policy, office, and votes. Harmel and Janda (1994) have argued that, although parties are ultimately motivated by certain goals, the pursuit of such goals is constrained by the fact that parties are inherently conservative organisations. In such organisations, change does not ‘just happen’; rather, it comes about through a change in leadership, or a change in the dominant faction, or an external shock such as a heavy electoral defeat or other critical event. Here I view such factors as *facilitators* of change, rather than as *explanations* for change in their own right (see also section 2.4). Stated otherwise, these factors cannot plau-

sibly be viewed as sufficient to generate change in the absence of goal-related incentives to adopt a new strategy (Duncan, 2007; Harmel et al., 1995; Harmel & Tan, 2003).

In the following analysis, I use deductive process tracing to assess the explanatory power of each of the explanations in Table 6.1 for the Swedish case. Having found these explanations insufficient for explaining all of the observed party behaviour, I then proceed with inductive process tracing. In so doing, I develop an explanation based on reputational constraint and the interaction between issue-based and non-issue-based strategies. In short, I argue for viewing the *cordon sanitaire* as an informal institution that came to constrain mainstream party behaviour by increasing the costs of switching to alternative strategies.

I pay particular attention to processes over time, as well to as the degree of correspondence between the motive statements of actors and their subsequent actions (Hadenius, 1983; O'Mahoney, 2015). As Pierson (2004, p. 71) puts it, '[a]ttentiveness to temporal process can help us recognise and explore parts of the social landscape that are likely to escape notice from alternative vantage points'. Recall that, in a process tracing analysis, one is less concerned with the number of pieces of evidence and more interested in the ability of any given piece of evidence to discriminate between competing explanations. While I assess the validity of multiple explanations, my main aim here is not to 'falsify' any of them in a strong sense. There are two reasons for this: first, not all of the explanations above generate highly precise empirical expectations; and second, not all of the empirical expectations are mutually exclusive (cf. Rohlfing, 2014). The complex nature of the process being analysed means that some indeterminacy remains. As such, the goal here is not to conduct a 'gladiator style of analysis, where one perspective goes forth and slays all others' (Friedrichs & Kratochwil, 2009, p. 721); rather, it is to use an overlooked perspective for the purpose of theoretical refinement.

6.1.2. Material

The empirical material consists of interviews, party documents, expert and voter surveys, and statements from party representatives in parliamentary debates and the media. As stated above, the temporal aspect is fundamental to the analysis, as it allows us to assess the validity of different explanations at different points in time. Therefore, evidence of the reaction of the mainstream parties to the results of the 2014 election and to the 2015 'refugee crisis' is crucial. For purposes of this analysis, I do not deem it essential to ascertain the extent to which subsequent changes in immigration policy

actually constitute co-optation of SD policies rather than a response to changing conditions external to the political arena (most notably an increase in the number of asylum-seekers). Any attempt at such a determination is fraught with epistemological challenges. More importantly, the main theoretical question addressed in this chapter is not why some parties later adopted restrictive policies; rather, it is why they first converged at the liberal end. Nevertheless, the variation in how mainstream parties in Sweden responded to the events of 2015 is highly revealing.

Most of the MPs contacted about interviews for this chapter were reluctant to participate, likely because of the sensitive nature of the topic and the fact that it was an ongoing strategic matter. I did not pursue any of the highly reluctant MPs further, on the assumption that any material gained by interviewing them would be of limited value. In the end, I arranged interviews with two MPs from the Moderate Party. This party is one of the most important ones for purposes of this chapter, since (as we shall see in my analysis) it is one of the parties for which the adoption of liberal immigration policies was most puzzling. Both interviewees have been closely involved with the party's policies on migration and integration. I granted them anonymity, in order to encourage them to speak openly. When I cite or quote them throughout my analysis, I refer to them as Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 2. The interviews took place in the spring of 2017, on the basis of a semi-structured approach with questions about policy changes during the relevant period, as well as about the MPs' perception of the role of the Sweden Democrats. The interviews are thus low in number; however, they constitute but one source of material among several others, and they corroborate rather than contradict other sources.

6.2. Analysis

The analysis that follows is carried out in three steps. First, I establish that the Swedish case has indeed been deviant, by showing that the other mainstream parties, when faced with competition from the Sweden Democrats, converged on liberal immigration policies. I also describe the reaction of the different parties to the 2014 election and the 2015 refugee crisis. Second, I consider policy-, office-, and vote-seeking explanations for why the parties acted as they did. Third, I argue that the *cordon sanitaire* against the Sweden Democrats – initially intended as a vote-seeking strategy – came to constrain these parties' choice of policy positions, until this constraint was removed by the external shock of the refugee crisis.

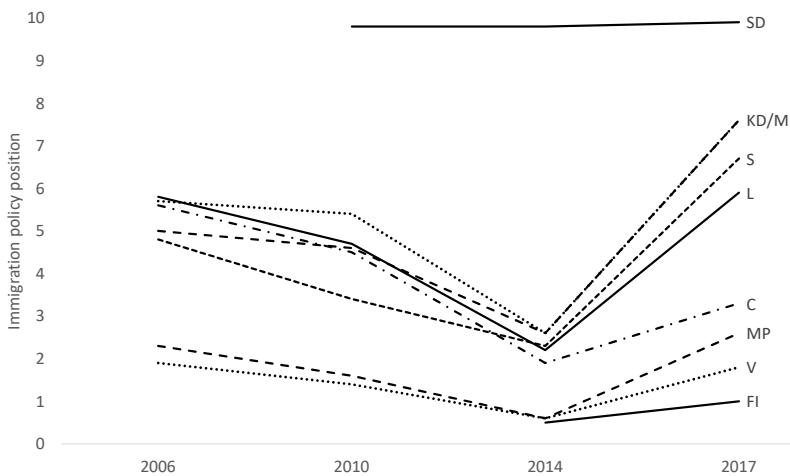
6.2.1. Changing positions on immigration policy

Historically, the immigration issue has been characterised by a low degree of politicisation in Sweden (Green-Pedersen & Krogstrup, 2008; Rydgren, 2004). Dahlström and Esaiasson (2013) find that immigration received very little attention in election campaigns for much of the 1970–2006 period. Among the mainstream parties, the Social Democrats have been the most opposed to liberal immigration laws (Hinnfors et al., 2012). In particular, restrictive labour immigration has been a key issue for that party, which it dropped only in 2014. Furthermore, concerns for the welfare system led the party to advocate transition rules for the new member states in the 2005 enlargement of the EU, as a measure against ‘social tourism’. Finally, while the centre-right parties together with the Green Party have been the main driving force behind liberalised immigration policies, the Moderate Party has been more ambivalent, often siding with the more restrictive Social Democrats.

The low salience of the immigration issue was disrupted somewhat in 1991, when a newly founded populist party, New Democracy, managed to win 6.7% of the vote and enter parliament. The party had campaigned on an anti-establishment platform, of which a restrictive policy on immigration only formed a part (Rydgren, 2002). New Democracy put more emphasis on the immigration issue in the 1994 election; by then, however, the leader of the party had left. Support for New Democracy collapsed in that election, and it failed to win any seats. According to Green-Pedersen and Odmark (2008), the brief success of the party nonetheless helped put immigration on the political agenda in the years that followed. Notably, as the 2002 election approached, the Liberal Party presented a policy programme on immigration and integration that included a proposal for mandatory language tests as a prerequisite for citizenship. The Liberal leader stressed that the purpose of the proposal was to improve integration rather than to reduce immigration (Bale, 2003, p. 80); nevertheless, the Liberal gambit came in for strong criticism from the Social Democrats, the Greens, and the Left Party (Dahlström & Esaiasson, 2013).

Figure 6.1 shows party positions on immigration policy, as estimated in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey. At the time of the 2006 election, no Swedish party took a highly restrictive position on immigration policy. However, although the salience of the issue remained low (not shown here), the parties took somewhat varied positions along this policy spectrum. In the period leading up to the 2014 election, however, the policy differences on this issue between the mainstream parties in Sweden gradually diminished. As can be

seen in Figure 6.1, all of the parties except the Sweden Democrats converged on the liberal end of the immigration dimension during the 2006–2014 period. This is consistent with changes in immigration policy as measured by the positions taken by Swedish MPs (Loxbo, 2015), as well as by the positions coded from party manifestos (Widfeldt, 2017). It is also consistent with data on voter perceptions collected in 2012, according to which a majority of voters perceive small or non-existent policy differences between the main stream parties on immigration (Loxbo, 2014).



Source: The 2006–2017 Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017).
Notes: 0 = ‘Strongly opposes tough policy’; 10 = ‘Strongly favours tough policy’.

Figure 6.1. Party positions on immigration, 2006–2017

In 2011, the minority Alliance government came to a cross-bloc agreement with the Green Party to liberalise Sweden’s immigration laws. The Social Democrats embraced this agreement in 2014. In the run-up to the 2014 election, Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt gave a speech urging Swedes to ‘open their hearts’ and to accept that the expected rising costs of accommodating asylum-seekers would put a strain on the state budget. While the speech was criticised for highlighting the costs of immigration, thereby legitimising the views of the Sweden Democrats, there was a consensus at this time among all of the other parties that Swedish immigration policy should indeed be liberal (Larsson, 2014).

In the months following the 2014 election (in which the SD increased its vote from 5.7% to 12.9%), this consensus came under challenge for the first time. The Christian Democrats made some policy proposals intended to reduce the costs of refugee reception and to improve the integration of immigrants into the labour market (Hägglund, 2014). According to Göran Hägglund, the party leader, such policies were best seen as a prerequisite for retaining Sweden's ability to remain open and generous toward immigrants, rather than the opposite. The Liberal Party soon followed with similar proposals, in January 2015 (Björklund et al., 2015). Like Hägglund, moreover, Liberal leader Jan Björklund emphasised that the measures were intended to improve *integration* rather than to limit *immigration* (*Svenska Dagbladet*, 2015-01-28). In May, the Moderates presented a revised policy platform on migration and integration, favouring openness but arguing that integration needed to be improved (Moderaterna, 2015). The beginning of 2015, then, marked the start of a partial policy co-optation by the Alliance parties, although their proposals remained at a substantial distance from the more radical policies advocated by the Sweden Democrats.

Later in 2015, the commitment to liberal immigration policies came to be tested by the events known in the political debate as the European 'refugee crisis'. This was a period during which an unprecedented number of refugees, primarily from Syria and Afghanistan, sought asylum in Sweden over the course of a few months. In July 2015, the Swedish Migration Agency estimated that 74,000 people would seek asylum over the course of the whole year; in reality, however, the Agency would receive over 100,000 applications in the September–November period alone. The agencies and municipalities involved found the situation increasingly hard to handle, particularly when it came to furnishing asylum-seekers with housing.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the governing coalition of Social Democrats and Greens was initially unwilling to implement stricter immigration rules, instead urging the EU to find a collective solution. In October 2015, however, the government and the four centre-right opposition parties came to an agreement to implement significantly more restrictive policies temporarily, in an explicit attempt to reduce the number of asylum-seekers (Regeringskansliet, 2015). While several of these measures were similar to those advocated by the SD, that party was not invited to the negotiations. The Left Party chose not to take part in the agreement because it found it too restrictive.

⁶⁴ Detailed analyses of the situation and of the Swedish government's response have been performed both by the Parliamentary Committee on the Constitution (Konstitutionsutskottet, 2016, pp. 396–454) and the Swedish National Audit Office (Riksrevisionen, 2017).

Despite being a government coalition partner, the Green Party strongly criticised the agreement, at the same time arguing that it had pushed it in a less restrictive direction. The Centre Party also accepted the agreement, but its leader Annie Lööf – in contrast to her Alliance colleagues – said that for ethical reasons she could not imagine setting a limit on the number of asylum-seekers (*Dagens Nyheter*, 2015-12-06). The parties that influenced the agreement most strongly in a restrictive direction were the Moderates and the Christian Democrats; both wanted temporary border controls to feature in the original agreement, but failed in this demand. Nevertheless, by mid-November the Migration Agency and the Police Authority both advised that border controls be implemented, on grounds that the situation now constituted a threat to public order and security. The government acted on this recommendation, agreeing that Sweden had now ‘reached its limits’ (*Svenska Dagbladet*, 2015-11-06). The border controls and the more restrictive immigration policy had the intended effect, significantly reducing the number of asylum-seekers. With the situation stabilised, political competition on the immigration issue could resume. By the time of the 2018 election, both the Moderates and the Christian Democrats were campaigning on restrictive immigration policies.

6.2.2. Explaining the adoption of liberal immigration policies

Let us return, however, to the period prior to the 2014 election. The question is: why did the mainstream parties in Sweden act contrary to both theoretical expectation and the pattern observed across Europe – not only in choosing not to co-opt stricter immigration policies, but in adopting even more liberal ones? In this section, I consider explanations for this behaviour as rooted in the pursuit of policy, of office, or of votes.

Policy-seeking

A straightforward explanation for why some parties promote more liberal immigration policies is, of course, that so doing is in line with their ideology (Bale, 2008). In the case of the centre-right parties, Spehar et al. (2011) argue, the pursuit of open entry policies has been ideologically driven. In particular, the Liberal Party and the Christian Democrats have historically favoured open policies as enjoined by moral and ethical values (Spehar et al., 2011, p. 28). More recently, moreover, the Centre Party has emerged as the centre-right party most consistently defending this position, as indicated by its reaction to the 2015 refugee crisis.

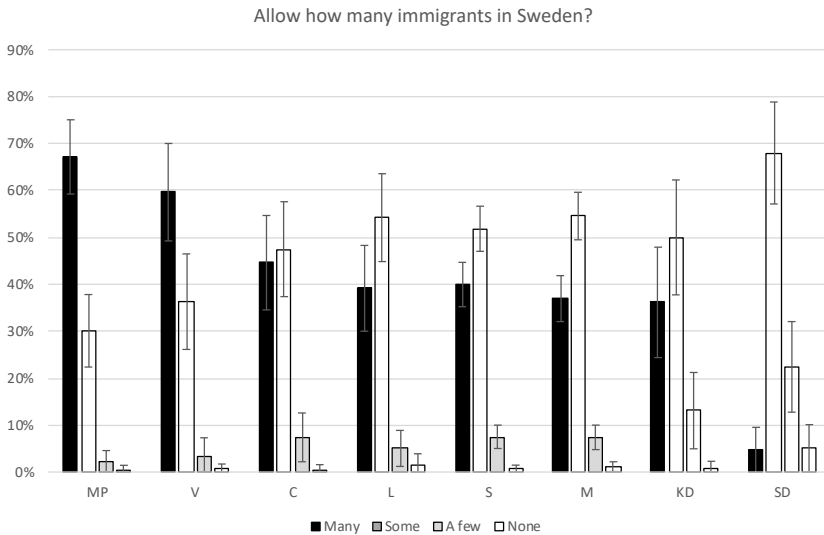
Can we attribute the move toward liberal immigration policies to policy-seeking, then? For some parties, yes; for others, the evidence is less convincing. In 2005, under the leadership of Fredrik Reinfeldt, the Moderate Party made significant changes in its platform and adopted the moniker ‘the New Moderates’. By adopting more centrist positions, especially on economic issues, the party sought to appeal to a wider voter base and thus to avoid repeating the defeat it had suffered in the 2002 elections (Lindbom, 2010). It is not clear, however, how much this renewal was driven by policy-seeking. Arguably, that is to say, the move could best be described as seeking office by way of seeking votes – at the expense of policy (since many key positions were abandoned) and internal party unity (given the resistance of the ‘old Moderates’ faction in the party). Immigration did not figure in this renewal initially, but it was the ‘new’ faction under Reinfeldt that took the party in a more liberal direction on that issue. Nevertheless, while the adoption of more centrist economic policies moved the party closer to the median voter, the same cannot be said of the party’s immigration policy reforms (see below).

While policies need to fit within a party’s broader ideological framework, this constraint appears to be a fairly loose one. The Moderate Party, with its ideological profile at the intersection of liberalism and conservatism (Ekengren & Oscarsson, 2015), may be particularly advantaged in terms of policy flexibility: within a little over a year, the party went from talking of ‘open hearts’ to urging the need for a ‘refugee pause’ (*Aftonbladet*, 2015-12-01). The fact that the party contested the 2018 election on highly restrictive immigration policies would certainly seem to speak against ideology as the prime driver behind the adoption of liberal policies in that area.

The argument that the adoption of liberal immigration policies was driven by ideology applies most plausibly to the parties that did not accept the 2015 migration agreement (the Left Party), or that did so reluctantly (the Greens and the Centre Party). Given these parties’ consistently liberal positions on immigration and the fact that a large share of their voters support these positions (Figure 6.2), they had both policy- and vote-seeking reasons to oppose the agreement.⁶⁵ By contrast, the Moderates had vote-seeking motivations to pursue more restrictive policies, while being flexible in terms of policy-seeking. Indeed, the position taken by the Centre Party – to keep the borders open but lower the costs of accommodating refugees – shows it is

⁶⁵ The different strategies pursued by the Left Party on the one hand and the Greens and the Centre Party on the other can be explained by the distinction between maintaining policy purity and seeking policy influence.

possible to retain an ideologically principled position by addressing the perceived problem at the other end. The party was in opposition, so it did not have to deliver on its declarations, and in the end it did in fact accept the agreement. Nevertheless, it contested the 2018 election on significantly more liberal immigration policies than the other Alliance parties did. In sum, the policy-seeking explanation is convincing for the Centre Party, but less so for the other Alliance parties.



Source: European Social Survey 2014. *Notes:* Respondents by party supported in last parliamentary election. Average shares for the four questions: 'To what extent do you think Sweden should allow the following to come and live here?: (1) Immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority; (2) immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority; (3) immigrants from poorer countries in Europe; (4) immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe. Point estimates with 95%-confidence intervals. N=1331.

Figure 6.2. Voter attitudes to immigration by party (2014)

Office-seeking

According to the office-seeking explanation, the convergence on liberal immigration policies was driven by the need to conform to the positions of (potential) coalition partners, in order to present a cohesive government alternative. It has been argued that the Moderates made such a move to close ranks with their Alliance partners prior to the 2006 election (Green-Pedersen

& Krogstrup, 2008), as well as with the agreement on migration policy in 2011 (Stuart, 2017). Similarly, the abandonment by the Social Democrats in 2014 of their restrictive line on labour immigration has been interpreted as closing ranks with their most likely coalition partner, the Greens (*Svenska Dagbladet*, 2014-08-28). However, while such cohesion is surely one aspect that parties consider, it is not clear how decisive it is. Immediately after the 2006 election, for instance, the Moderate minister for migration, Tobias Billström, did not hide the fact that ‘there are obvious differences between my view and that of the other Alliance parties on, for example, family-reunification immigration’ (*Dagens Nyheter*, 2006-10-21). Furthermore, Billström committed against issuing any amnesties for immigrants residing in the country illegally, despite the preference of the other Alliance parties for such a policy.⁶⁶

Similarly, although significant differences re-emerged between the different Alliance parties following the refugee crisis, these were not enough to stop the Alliance from announcing it would run on a joint policy platform in the 2018 election (Tobé et al., 2016). Annie Lööf, leader of the Centre Party, declared that ‘we will govern again after the next election [...] Migration policy is just one of many issues [...] and having somewhat different views is a strength for an alliance’ (*Dagens Nyheter*, 2015-12-06). In other words, the Alliance stressed the need for a united front in elections, while allowing the individual parties to develop a more distinct profile between elections (cf. Sagarzazu & Klüver, 2017). Divergent views on immigration policy do not appear to have been a deal breaker from an office-seeking point of view.

Furthermore, even if a party finds it necessary to conform to the preferred policies of its coalition partners, it can do so with varying degrees of enthusiasm: there is an important distinction between agreeing to a policy compromise (in order to reach some other goal, such as office), and actually embracing these policy positions as one’s own. As described above, the Moderates have emphasised their programmatic independence from the other Alliance parties on multiple occasions. In the case of the 2011 migration agreement, however, they did not do so. It would in principle have been possible for the Moderates to profile themselves as the restrictive voice within the Alliance, emphasising that they had influenced the agreement in a more restrictive direction. Indeed, this is how both MPs interviewed for this study presented things in retrospect. At the time, however, the agreement was framed by the party leadership as a ‘historic success’ that would deprive the

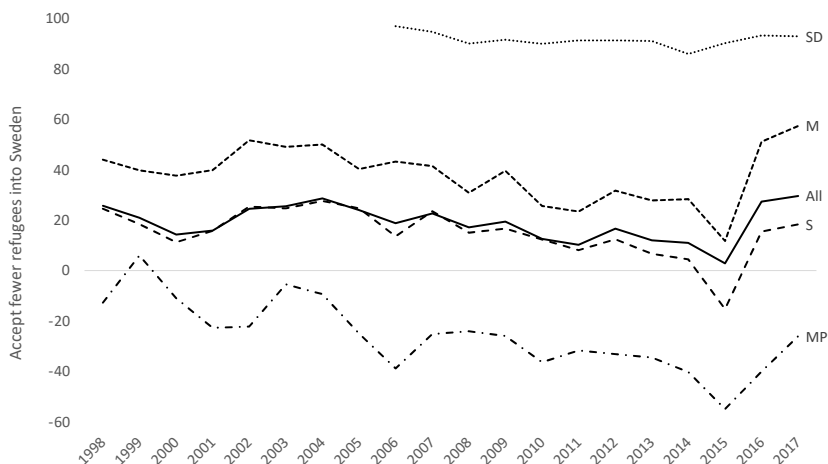
⁶⁶ The other Alliance parties voted against such an amnesty in late 2005, but did so because they found the particular law proposed by the red-green government to be flawed, not because they were against the idea as such.

Sweden Democrats of influence on their key issue (*SVT Nyheter*, 2011-03-03). Billström, who took part in negotiating the agreement, later stated that ‘it has sometimes been viewed as if four centre-right parties and a green party sat down and agreed upon things with their eye on the Sweden Democrats, but the Sweden Democrats are actually completely irrelevant for this discussion’ (cited in Stuart, 2017, p. 30; my translation). To explain why the party acted as it did in 2011, I argue below that we need to consider the strategic use of the *cordon sanitaire*.

Turning to the Social Democrats, we may again ask how much their decision to ‘approach’ the Green Party was driven by concerns for policy cohesion with a likely coalition partner. We would expect such concerns to have been even greater in 2010, when the parties contested the elections on a joint policy platform, than in 2014 when they did not. However, although their political opponents commented on the divergence between the two parties’ views on labour immigration in 2010, their joint manifesto simply did not raise the issue; like the Alliance, they de-emphasised issues on which they were not in agreement. In 2014 the situation was also somewhat different, in that the Alliance together with the Green Party had already implemented liberal labour immigration laws (with the 2011 agreement). For the Social Democrats, the much less costly preference for the status quo was no longer an option; instead, the party would have had actively to oppose an existing cross-bloc agreement.

Furthermore, and fundamental to my main argument in this chapter, the Social Democrats had come increasingly under attack for holding positions on immigration policy that were similar to those of the Sweden Democrats. In late 2013, a high-ranking representative for the Social Democrats said that the party should formulate labour-immigration policies that appealed both to left-wing voters and to those sympathising with the SD (*Dagens industri*, 2013-12-03). When pressed on this issue, another representative noted that the Social Democrats had adopted their policies on labour immigration ‘before the Sweden Democrats even existed’ (*Sveriges Radio*, 2014-06-09). Both statements were heavily criticised by political opponents, who insisted that such competition with the Sweden Democrats was unacceptable (*Aftonbladet*, 2014-06-13; *Svenska Dagbladet*, 2014-06-13). I argue below that the Social Democrats’ need to reaffirm their commitment to the *cordon sani-*

taire contributed to their finally abandoning their bid for a more restrictive policy on labour immigration.⁶⁷



Source: SOM Institute (2018). Notes: Index of agreement with the proposal: 'Accept fewer refugees into Sweden'. Share of respondents in disagreement subtracted from share of respondents in agreement. Party sympathies based on the question: 'Which party do you like best today?' The category 'All' includes all respondents regardless of party sympathy.

Figure 6.3. Voter attitudes toward refugees (1998–2017)

Vote-seeking

Finally, we turn to the explanation that the convergence on liberal immigration policies was driven by voter demand. Survey data on voter attitudes toward refugee acceptance shows little support for this explanation. As seen in Figure 6.3, the share of voters in agreement with the proposal to 'accept fewer refugees into Sweden' has consistently been larger than the share of respondents in disagreement.⁶⁸ Respondents sympathising with the Social Democrats are close to average on this question, while Moderate sym-

⁶⁷ There are, however, later examples of the Social Democrats' accepting immigration policy compromises as a result of office-seeking. In the fall of 2017, for instance, the Social Democrats reluctantly accepted the demands of their junior coalition partner (the Greens) to propose a bill allowing migrants who had been denied asylum to apply for residence permits under certain conditions. By now the Social Democrats had adopted the position that migrants not granted asylum should leave the country; however, the issue threatened the survival of the cabinet (*Aftonbladet*, 2017-11-21). Despite the minority status of the government, moreover, the bill passed, because it was supported by the Centre Party.

⁶⁸ The pattern is similar even if the wording of the policy proposal is reversed (Demker, 2009, p. 49).

thisers are more restrictive. For the 2010–2014 period, for example, the proportion of Moderates favouring fewer refugees is between 23 and 28 percentage points larger than the proportion who do not. There are large differences between the different parties' sympathisers – SD supporters and Green voters being at opposite ends – with the Moderate trend line consistently being about halfway between the two (not all party sympathies shown for presentational purposes). We can draw two conclusions from Figure 6.3. First, in adopting significantly more liberal immigration policies, a party such as the Moderates appears to have moved *away* from its voters during the period studied here. Second, to the extent that two parties such as the Moderates and the Greens adopt similar liberal immigration policies (as in the 2011 migration agreement), the latter will be much more congruent with its voters than the former.

Table 6.2 illustrates this pattern in another way, showing differences between supporters of the eight Swedish parties in terms of the effect of immigration preferences on vote choice.⁶⁹ The results in Table 6.2 are computed as average changes in predicted probabilities (in terms of percentage points), with control variables held constant at mean values. For example, for each one-unit increase in opposition to immigration (on a 0–10 scale), the predicted probability of voting for the Sweden Democrats in 2014 increases by 2.8 percentage points. For the Green Party, a similar increase in opposition to immigration instead corresponds to a decrease in the predicted probability of 2.0 percentage points. As can be seen, the Left Party and the Greens are the only two parties for which vote choice is consistently and significantly associated with a more positive view of immigration. The opposite effect is most strongly associated with the Moderates and the Sweden Democrats. The results also suggest that the Moderates had ownership of the immigration issue in 2002 and 2006, but that they subsequently lost it to the Sweden Democrats, along with the voters most opposed to immigration (cf. the post-election analysis in Moderaterna, 2014).

⁶⁹ Vote choice is measured using the question: 'Party voted for in last national election'. Opposition to immigration is measured using an index consisting of the following survey items: (1) 'Immigration bad or good for country's economy'; (2) 'Country's cultural life undermined or enriched by immigrants'; and (3) 'Immigrants make country worse or better place to live' (Cronbach's alpha = 0.84). The data are weighted using the included post-stratification weights (based on gender, age, urbanisation, and region) in order to reduce sampling error and potential non-response bias. Results from unweighted data do not differ substantially from those reported here.

Table 6.2. The effect of opposition to immigration on vote choice, 2002–2014

Year	V	S	MP	C	L	KD	M	SD
2002	-1.2***	-1.5	-0.6**	0.6	-0.2	0.8	2.1***	N/A
2006	-0.8***	1.4*	-1.7***	-0.4	-0.7	-0.2	2.3***	N/A
2010	-0.5***	0.3	-1.6***	-1.0**	0.0	-0.1	1.8*	1.2***
2014	-0.7***	0.5	-2.0***	-0.7	-0.8*	0.8*	-0.0	2.8***

Source: European Social Survey 2002–2014. Notes: Significant at * the 0.10 level, ** the 0.05 level, *** the 0.01 level. Average change in predicted probabilities (in terms of percentage points) from multinomial logit model predicting vote choice from opposition to immigration (0–10). Results from one-unit changes with control variables held constant at mean values. Controlling for age, income, education, sex, and position on economic policy. See Table A.10 in the appendix for full model.

Even if voter preferences are known, vote-seeking strategies are complicated by the fact that parties still lack reliable information about how a given policy adjustment will affect voter behaviour in the end (Budge, 1994). If an issue has low salience, for example, it is likely to matter little for a voter whether or not a given party represents his/her preference on this issue. In the Swedish case, immigration did not become a highly salient issue until the second half of 2014 (Santesson, 2015). The electoral threat of the SD was also significantly underrated in polls leading up to the election (Walther, 2014). Still, the uncertainty argument implies that parties will have a preference for preserving the status quo rather than for pursuing liberal immigration policies, in particular in the absence of any strong voter demand. A vote-seeking argument can more plausibly be made about party behaviour *after* the 2014 elections, when some of the parties sought cautiously to differentiate themselves on immigration policy. If vote-seeking is characterised by uncertainty, this implies that electoral cost-benefit analysis can be done more reliably after elections, when voter preferences are most clearly articulated (Budge, 1994; Kollman et al., 1992; Laver, 2005; Somer-Topcu, 2009). Nevertheless, the policy reforms proposed by some of the Alliance parties in early 2015 were primarily focused on *integration* rather than *immigration*; unlike the SD, no party approached the question of immigration volume: i.e., how many immigrants Sweden can accommodate. We return to this observation below.

Finally, we turn to Meguid's (2008) argument about relative vote-maximisation. Even if there is no strong voter demand driving the convergence on liberal immigration policies, this argument implies that it may still make

vote-seeking sense for some parties to adopt such a position. Specifically, this means that a mainstream party may pursue an adversarial strategy with the aim of boosting support for the radical right, in order to hurt a mainstream rival that has applied an accommodative strategy toward that quarter. The choice of strategy depends on the relative electoral threat posed by the radical right to the mainstream parties; accordingly, we shall look at the electoral gains made and losses suffered by these parties between 2006 and 2010. The 2010 election is of particular interest here, since it marks the turning point from dismissive to adversarial strategies. As can be seen in Table 6.3, the Sweden Democrats took votes from all parties except the Christian Democrats in 2010. The SD took more from the Social Democrats than from the Moderates (25,000 vs 17,000); however, in relation to the total number of votes won by each party in 2006, the difference is trivial (1.4 percent vs 1.2 percent). The Social Democrats also lost four times as many votes to the Moderates as they did to the Sweden Democrats.

Based on these results, it is not clear that the threat from the SD constitutes the ‘significant vote loss’ required for parties to abandon their low-cost dismissive strategies (Meguid, 2008, p. 97). Even if it did, moreover, Meguid’s theory predicts that one or more mainstream parties would then resort to policy co-optation. The adoption of a joint adversarial strategy, such as that observed in Sweden, cannot be explained by Meguid’s theory, since there is no scenario therein that predicts it. Meguid does consider organisational and reputational constraints on party behaviour; however, for Meguid these primarily account for a failure to act – not for action in an unexpected direction. Stated otherwise, these constraints can explain why a party maintains its current strategy rather than actively pursuing a different one (Meguid, 2008, pp. 104–107). If a party is internally divided, or its decision-making is decentralised, it will find it hard to adopt timely and/or costly strategies. Similarly, if a party has consistently held a certain policy position, it may find that shifting rapidly to a new one is costly for its reputation, due to the appearance of opportunism that it produces. In the next section, I argue that reputational constraint *did* matter very much in the Swedish case, but that we need to consider it not just in relation to policy positions but to non-issue-based commitments as well.

Table 6.3. Voter net gains and losses by party, 2006–2010 (thousands)

Party in 2006	Party in 2010							
	V	S	MP	C	L	KD	M	SD
Left Party (V)		-14	+3	-6	+8	0	-6	+3
Social Democrats (S)	+14		+63	+17	+6	-6	+102	+25
Green Party (MP)	-3	-63		-3	-17	-6	+6	+3
Centre Party (C)	+6	-17	+3		-17	+8	0	+14
Liberal Party (L)	-8	-6	+17	+17		-6	+22	+3
Christian Democrats (KD)	0	+6	+6	-8	+6		0	0
Moderate Party (M)	+6	-102	-6	0	-22	0		+17
Sweden Democrats (SD)	-3	-25	-3	-14	-3	0	-17	

Source: Statistics Sweden (2011). Notes: The table should be read column-wise. Positive numbers mean that gains from another party are greater than losses. Negative numbers mean that losses are greater than gains.

6.2.3. The institutionalisation of the *cordon sanitaire*

We now shift our focus from the issue-based strategy of policy adaptation to the non-issue-based strategy of the *cordon sanitaire*. In this section, I argue that the mainstream parties erected a *cordon sanitaire* against the Sweden Democrats in order to make that party less attractive to voters. I argue as well that the *cordon sanitaire* came to be ‘institutionalised’ in such a way as to have a highly structuring effect on subsequent party behaviour. In short, by committing to the *cordon sanitaire*, it became costly for the mainstream parties to adopt or retain policy positions similar to those of the Sweden Democrats.

In Meguid’s (2008) theory, reputational constraint can explain why parties do not change their policy positions, but it cannot explain why they change them in an unexpected direction. By taking the interaction between issue-based and non-issue-based strategies into account, I argue that reputational constraint can explain not only stasis but also directionally constrained change. Although issue-based and non-issue-based strategies are in theory independent of each other (van Spanje, 2018), I argue that the institutionalisation of the *cordon sanitaire* forced an alignment between the two – through a mechanism of reputational constraint. Stated otherwise, a party

that failed to embrace liberal immigration policies was vulnerable to attacks from opponents that it was not sufficiently committed to the *cordon sanitaire*.

In focusing on a process of institutionalisation, I follow Greif and Kingston (2011, p. 25), who argue that '[a] social situation is "institutionalized" when this structure motivates each individual to follow a regularity of behavior in that social situation and to act in a manner contributing to the perpetuation of that structure'. To illustrate this process, I use an approach common in the literature on historical institutionalism. That is, my analysis is structured according to (1) how the institution was established, (2) what made it stable, and (3) what enabled change (Thelen, 1999).

Establishment

When the Sweden Democrats started to pose an electoral threat, the mainstream parties had been taking a largely dismissive approach to the immigration issue for several decades (Dahlström & Esaiasson, 2013). Given this threat, the established parties had a joint interest in reducing the SD's electoral appeal. This preference could arise from any combination of vote-seeking or policy-seeking concerns. Parties which are ideologically dissimilar to the SD are more likely to be motivated by the fear of policy contagion, while parties that are more similar to it are more likely to be motivated by votes. Prior to the 2006 election, the established parties applied the strategy with the lowest cost – the dismissive one. Nevertheless, the SD doubled its share of the vote in the election – coming up one percentage point short of the parliamentary threshold of 4%, but casting doubt on how well the strategy was working.

When the dismissive strategy proved unsuccessful, the Social Democrats, followed by the Liberals and the Moderates, adopted the position that the SD needed to be tackled head-on in political debate (Jungar, 2017). The Social Democrats' post-election analysis stated: 'To continue marginalising [the Sweden Democrats] by ostracising them through silence or electoral arrangements will only increase their martyrdom' (Socialdemokraterna, 2006, p. 127; my translation). The mainstream parties refrained from politicising the immigration issue much, for fear of benefitting the SD; and they applied a strategy of discrediting that party, for example by demonising it and committing themselves not to cooperate with it (Kiiskinen & Saveljeff, 2010). Thus, with an eye to reducing the SD's electoral appeal, the other parties put in place an informal institution dedicated to its isolation: the *cordon sanitaire*.

While there was little coordination involved, the expectation of shared benefit (reduced competition from the SD) resulted in behavioural regulari-

ties (attempts at discrediting the SD) based on norms of tolerance and human equality that the SD allegedly did not share. Prime Minister Reinfeldt, for example, said that the Sweden Democrats should be kept from exerting any influence, because the seven other parties ‘are fundamentally based on a tradition of trust and willingness to do something with politics where the eighth is completely deviant. They bring hate to Swedish politics’ (Reinfeldt, 2013; my translation). While norm-based appeals had surfaced already in the debate surrounding New Democracy (Dahlström & Esaiasson, 2013), such arguments became yet more potent when associated with a party with an extremist legacy; the restrictive position of the Social Democrats on labour migration remained consistent over time as New Democracy came and went (Hinnfors et al., 2012) – but not, as we have seen, when faced with the Sweden Democrats.

When the attempt to discredit the SD proved unsuccessful at preventing the party’s entry into parliament in 2010, the other parties started to politicise the immigration issue (Rydgren & van der Meiden, 2019). This is illustrated most clearly by the way in which the 2011 migration agreement was communicated to voters. When the Alliance government and the Greens reached this agreement, the Moderates had to drop policy reforms they had formulated as recently as 2009 (Kristersson et al., 2009), and actually to move *away* from the preferences of their voters. On the other hand, by framing this as an adversarial strategy aimed at depriving the Sweden Democrats of influence, the minority Alliance government could counter criticism from the opposition that it was relying on informal support from the radical right. In other words, the adoption of liberal immigration policies – and the way in which these were communicated to voters – makes sense from a vote-seeking perspective if seen as part of a non-issue-based strategy of isolation. Through these actions, the mainstream parties further reinforced a *cordon sanitaire* that, they believed at the time, would be a successful weapon against the Sweden Democrats.

Stability

Having based a strategy on appeals to certain norms, an actor cannot behave in ways that appear to violate those norms without incurring costs. This does not mean that the behaviour is norm-driven, but rather that strategic appeals to norms will constrain future strategic behaviour. Still, it is important to note that the *cordon sanitaire* was indeed based on strong normative commitments, because parties are more strongly constrained on matters of principle than on pragmatic issues (Tavits, 2007). At the level of parties, the associated

costs can be equated with potential electoral losses (we return to costs at the individual level below): voters may become distrustful of a party that acts inconsistently. By committing to an adversarial strategy, then, the cost of subsequently pursuing an accommodative strategy was greatly increased; the parties were reputationally constrained (cf. Meguid, 2008, pp. 35–36).

Even if potential voter sanctions would not have been enough to inhibit a change in strategy, the parties also faced sanctions from rival parties. In early 2013, the Moderate minister for migration, Billström, said ‘the voters clearly want a change in immigration policies’, and called for a discussion about how the ‘volume’ of asylum-seekers affects the cost and quality of integration (SVT *Nyheter*, 2013-02-03). This drew fierce criticism from rival parties (including coalition partners) and, as discussed below, also caused internal turmoil within the Moderate Party. Such attempts to mobilise electoral support on the immigration issue prior to the 2014 elections were invariably met with accusations of ‘fishing in murky waters’ from political opponents, together with calls for commitment to the *cordon sanitaire*.⁷⁰ In late 2013, for example, Reinfeldt accused a leading Social Democrat of buying into ‘the us-and-them mindset, which is the core ideology of the xenophobic movement’ (Sydsvenskan, 2011-11-19). He also accused the current leader of the Social Democrats, Håkan Juholt, of not being a committed ‘counterforce’ against the Sweden Democrats, unlike his predecessor Mona Sahlin.

In this way, the parties would make use of their rivals’ earlier commitments to the *cordon sanitaire* in order to discredit them. Such sanctions had mainly a vote-seeking purpose: to hurt a rival electorally by drawing attention to behaviour inconsistent with previous normative commitments.⁷¹ However, the parties also had a policy-seeking incentive to engage in such sanctions, given that the left has traditionally favoured generous refugee policies and strict labour-migration policies, while the right has favoured the opposite combination. Sanctions could thus also serve the purpose of coercing a rival to back down from a policy proposal with which one disagreed – or, failing that, of hurting that rival electorally. In other words, party sanctions here serve to amplify the effect of voter sanctions.

⁷⁰ This expression – typically referring to the pursuit of the anti-immigrant vote – has been used by political opponents in reference to such proposals as the Liberals’ call for mandatory language tests (Borås Tidning, 2002-09-19) and for a burka ban (Sydsvenskan, 2010-08-26), as well as the Social Democrats’ opposition to labour migration (Expressen, 2012-12-24) and to free movement following EU enlargement (Sydsvenskan, 2004-02-02).

⁷¹ ‘Party sanctions’ as described here bears some resemblance to the idea of *rhetorical action* (the strategic use of norm-based arguments) as developed by Schimmelfennig (2001). In the interests of analytical parsimony, however, I do not engage with this concept.

Note that the causal efficacy of party sanctions does not require the assumption that the actors involved act against their own best interests, due to a 'logic of appropriateness'; rather, it requires only that they believe it in their best interest to comply for consequentialist reasons (a distinction further discussed in the concluding chapter). Stated otherwise, if a party perceives that votes might be gained by mobilising on restrictive policies, it may nonetheless refrain from so doing due to the threat of sanctions; when the expected costs of sanctions are sufficiently large, the preference ordering of strategies must be revised. The parties with voters most favourable to liberal immigration policies (e.g., the Greens and the Left) had little to lose and much to gain from pursuing sanctions against their rivals. However, sanctions were pursued by *all* parties, giving them the ability to score easy wins against political opponents but at the same time reinforcing the constraints of the *cordon sanitaire*. As the interviewees put it:

There was not a good debating atmosphere about migration policy at this time. Neither in public debate nor internally in the Moderate Party [... .] Migration, which is a very difficult and complex question, became Sweden's most polarised issue where there were really only two perspectives in the debate. Either the model of the Sweden Democrats, where there are always too many people coming to Sweden; or this other extreme position, that there are no borders at all – that even thinking this pits people against each other – and that if we only open our hearts things will be fine. And unfortunately, the Moderate Party contributed to this. (Interviewee 1)

As soon as a party so much as mentioned anything [about immigration], it was told that 'you're flirting with the Sweden Democrats'. And it was used by both sides. If the opposition said something, the Alliance attacked them and the other way around. It became a bat. The Sweden Democrats became a bat with which to hit each other over the head [... .] And this made the Sweden Democrats' presence in parliament result in these issues not being discussed enough, and it has delayed important reforms [... .] If the Sweden Democrats had not been in parliament, it would have been more legitimate to raise and discuss these issues, and then I think things would have happened sooner. (Interviewee 2)

This universal self-enforcement of the *cordon sanitaire* could be described as an 'equilibrium' in which parties sanction their rivals, because they expect that they will be sanctioned themselves (cf. Greif & Kingston, 2011; Shepsle, 2006). Since parties are collective actors, however, the use of sanctions need not be the result of anything remotely resembling a coordinated strategy; as

discussed below, some parties were in fact quite factionalised on this issue. Furthermore, even more important may have been the perception that the *cordon sanitaire* was there to stay, whether or not it was enforced by the parties themselves, because of an external enforcer: the media. Swedish parties faced media that took a favourable stance toward immigration (Green-Pedersen & Odmalm, 2008; Hellström, 2016), and the Moderates have been explicit in their view that the media contributed to a destructive debating atmosphere by turning policy discussions into a question about how they related to the Sweden Democrats (Moderaterna, 2014, pp. 14–15). In the words of Interviewee 2, ‘the media would hound people and say, “look, you’re running the errands of the SD, and you’re becoming Sweden Democrats all of you” and whatnot [...] The media is hugely responsible’.

Having committed to an adversarial strategy, the parties thus faced potential sanctions from voters, rival parties, and the media were they to pursue more restrictive immigration policies. I do not attempt here the daunting task of assessing the relative importance of these different sanctions, but I would argue that their joint effect on the stability of the *cordon sanitaire* was greater than the sum of the parts. While the potential cost of voter sanctions remained unclear due to the uncertainty of vote-seeking, sanctions from rival parties and the media were observable, and therefore certain. Under pressure to reaffirm their commitment to the *cordon sanitaire*, parties came to abandon policy positions that pre-dated the SD, such as that of the Social Democrats on labour migration. The parties were thus reputationally constrained not only by their past policy positions, but also by their commitments to the *cordon sanitaire*.

At the same time, the Greens and the Left Party adopted explicit anti-racism profiles and radicalised their immigration policies further. Together with a newcomer party, Feminist Initiative, these parties staked out a position close to the polar opposite of that favoured by the Sweden Democrats.⁷² Since this reduced the relative distance between the other parties and the SD, it created incentives for further repositioning. Political competition on the immigration issue thus became increasingly bipolar, with the parties differentiating themselves very little across the spectrum, because being closest to the Sweden Democrats – regardless of the absolute distance – was grounds for discrediting attempts by political opponents. According to Interviewee 1,

⁷² Feminist Initiative won 3.1% of the votes in the 2014 elections, thus falling below the 4% electoral threshold for entering parliament.

there was an active fear of being on the same position as the Sweden Democrats [...] During the second Alliance government, policies were turned in the wrong direction in a very unfavourable way for the Moderates [...] It was not their presence or policies per se, but rather our decision to handle them the way we did that led to this. And when I say 'we', I include the Moderates. But you also have to remember that, while this was not that long ago, it was still a completely different time. There was a very broad consensus in this parliament that the Sweden Democrats should in every way be isolated, by all of public Sweden, newspapers, civil society, etc. [...] But I think it's been counter-productive, because it has hurt rather than helped [...] If the Alliance government had at a much earlier stage thought about what would be reasonable and sustainable immigration policies [...], the Sweden Democrats wouldn't have 20% in the opinion polls. But unfortunately we didn't. And that's often the case when you try too hard to be strategic.

The fear of being associated with the Sweden Democrats was also actively used by the party in order to monopolise certain issues. As SD party secretary Björn Söder said following a campaign on the criminalisation of begging (which the SD framed as a migration problem), 'we knew that we had the support of the Swedish people when it comes to beggars, and that we are alone on the arena. People in the Moderate and Centre parties have expressed similar views earlier, but we realised they wouldn't dare to do so now' (*Dagens Nyheter*, 2014-07-03).

Not everyone agreed with the adversarial approach, however, and a party such as the Moderates was by no means internally unified in its commitment to liberal immigration policies (Ekengren & Oscarsson, 2015). The existence of competing factions can be explained by different policy preferences, or by different estimations of which strategy constitutes the better vote-seeking choice (or some combination of the two). Either way, it was difficult for those favouring more restrictive policies to mobilise internal opposition to the prevailing line. Not only could the party leadership use the hierarchical tools of the organisation to sanction dissenting behaviour; it also had the upper hand in that its position conformed with the *cordon sanitaire*. Open advocacy of restrictive immigration policies thus came at a high cost. Such costs cannot simply be equated with electoral losses, unlike at the party level; more realistically they reflect personal and professional costs, such as damage to one's reputation or career. When Billström made his statement about refugee volumes in 2013, he was strongly criticised by Reinfeldt, the leader of his party – a response that Billström later said 'silenced the debate' (*SVT Nyheter*, 2017-10-29). As Interviewee 1 described it, 'the way [Billström] was treated,

which was witnessed by everyone in our parliamentary group – of course after that it became very difficult to have a dissenting opinion on immigration policy, if you wanted to keep working in the role you had’.

Change

Following the 2014 election, however, the mobilisation of internal dissent in the Moderate Party was facilitated by another factor: voter demand. As discussed earlier, the effect of voter demand is strongest following elections, when voter preferences have been translated into vote choice. If the self-enforcing nature of the *cordon sanitaire* had made it a make-it-or-break-it strategy in terms of vote-seeking, the results of the 2014 elections showed that it was clearly broken. This information about voter preferences reduced vote-seeking uncertainty and made for a massive shift in the relative expected utility of pursuing an accommodative strategy. It also contributed to an intra-party power shift in favour of the restrictive faction. Members of the Moderate parliamentary party group ‘realised pretty quickly that the voters were trying to tell us something’, and toward the end of 2014 there was increasingly open support for policy reform (Interviewee 1).

As described earlier, the Christian Democrats became the first mainstream party to challenge the liberal consensus, in December 2014. From a vote-seeking perspective this is not surprising, given that the party (apart from the SD) had the voters least favourable to liberal immigration policies. In the election shortly before, moreover, it had come dangerously close to the 4% electoral threshold (at 4.6%, its worst result in two decades). There may also have been a sense of urgency for the Christian Democrats, since it was believed at the time that a snap election would be held in March 2015.⁷³ The Liberals and the Moderates followed in early 2015 – albeit with proposals that were fairly modest, seen in a comparative European context. For the Moderates, it was easier at this time to reform policies on integration than on immigration, since the former related to one of the party’s most salient issues, employment, while the latter was still very much perceived as ‘owned’ by the Sweden Democrats (Interviewee 2; cf. Odmalm, 2011). Furthermore, while the election results reduced the uncertainty of the vote-seeking calculus, they in fact provided the parties with no legitimate reason to violate the *cordon sanitaire*. Since policy reforms following an electoral defeat can be more clearly identified as party strategy, they have a higher risk of incurring accu-

⁷³ The threat of a snap election was subsequently removed by the December agreement (see section 3.1.3). Just as the Christian Democrats were the first to challenge the consensus on liberal immigration policies, they were also the first party to defect from the December agreement.

sations of unprincipled opportunism – which the Alliance parties did indeed face in early 2015 (*Aftonbladet*, 2015-01-28).

Shortly thereafter, however, the refugee crisis changed the parameters of political competition on the immigration issue fundamentally, rendering the enforcing effect of sanctions largely ineffective. These events were perceived as requiring radical action: in October 2015, Foreign Minister Margot Wallström spoke of an impending ‘system collapse’; and a few days later the minister for migration, Morgan Johansson, said that Sweden had reached its limits and could no longer guarantee food and shelter for arriving refugees (*Dagens Nyheter*, 2015-10-30, 2015-11-06). Interviewee 2 describes the situation in the following way:

It was completely chaotic. Those who say it was not chaotic have no idea what was really going on [...]. It was both the matter of handling state finances and of dealing with practicalities so that people wouldn’t have to live on the streets. It jolted people. There was no time to think about the Sweden Democrats – it was about solving urgent problems [...]. And then the government and the Alliance made a couple of difficult decisions [...]. You knew that, if we don’t do anything now, that would really have played into the hands of the Sweden Democrats. So I guess it was more the other way around, that now we actually have to do something or no one will ever trust us again.

In other words, a failure to act was perceived as more costly than potential sanctions for inconsistent behaviour. The urgency of the situation provided a legitimate reason for parties to go against their earlier commitments, including putting a cap on the number of refugees. After the 2015 migration agreement, furthermore, only the Left Party (which did not take part in it) could continue to make credible use of discrediting sanctions.

At the same time, however, the Sweden Democrats could now draw attention to the fact that the other parties were converging with them – not, of course, to coerce them into changing their policies, but rather to legitimise their own. In a debate shortly after the adoption of the 2015 migration agreement, Jimmie Åkesson, the SD party leader, claimed that ‘what was previously called “racism” is now “realism”’. What was previously considered impossible is suddenly a necessity. What was previously called inhumane is now said to be responsible. It is quite amazing how fast things can turn in politics sometimes’ (Sveriges riksdag, 2016, p. 21; my translation). The parties most invested in the *cordon sanitaire* struggled with their political credibility following the 2015 migration agreement. The Social Democrats, having referred to SD policies as ‘racist’ and ‘neo-fascist’ earlier, found themselves

repeatedly having to emphasise the exceptional nature of the situation. When pressed on the issue in a debate, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven said that ‘this government does what needs to be done. Unlike the Sweden Democrats, we are not against immigration for ideological reasons’ (Sveriges riksdag, 2016, p. 24; my translation).

The refugee crisis, then, was an external shock (cf. Harmel & Janda, 1994) that disrupted the enforcement of reputational constraint and thus reduced the costs associated with adopting more restrictive policies. Unsurprisingly, the parties with the voters least favourable to a highly liberal line on immigration were the ones which made the most radical changes in their policies: by 2017, the Moderates and the Christian Democrats had reduced their distance to the Sweden Democrats by two thirds (see Figure 6.1 on page 162). Both of these parties, moreover, had elected new party leaders in early 2015, reducing the cost of reputational constraint further. Reinfeldt soon fell out of grace, and the Moderates were quick to signal their realisation that the party had been out of touch with its voters. In November 2016, Reinfeldt’s successor, Anna Kinberg Batra (2016), published an article deploring the fact that people who had ‘warned about an unsustainable situation’ had been ostracised.

6.3. Conclusions

Why did the Swedish parties respond to the radical right by converging on liberal immigration policies? This behaviour is puzzling in a European context characterised by ‘contagion of the right’, where mainstream parties tend to co-opt the restrictive immigration policies of the radical right in order to win back voters. It is also puzzling in light of spatial theories of party competition, such as Meguid’s (2005, 2008) theory about electoral competition between mainstream parties and ‘niche parties’ such as the radical right. According to Meguid, mainstream parties (constrained or otherwise) can be expected not to adopt joint adversarial strategies, i.e., to take up, in a collective manner, policy positions opposite to those of the radical right. In this chapter, I have shown not only that Meguid’s predictions are incompatible with the Swedish case, but also that standard policy-, office-, and vote-seeking explanations fail to account for all of the observed behaviour.

I have further argued that, in order to explain the Swedish case, we need to consider the interaction between issue-based strategies (policy adaptation) and non-issue-based strategies (the *cordon sanitaire*). In an attempt to make the SD less attractive to voters, the other parties formed a *cordon sanitaire*

against that party, ruling out any kind of cooperation with it and demonising it as a party ‘unlike the others’. This commitment to isolating the radical right (on the part not only of the other parties but of the media as well) resulted in an increasing institutionalisation of the *cordon sanitaire*. This informal institution came to structure subsequent party behaviour, by affecting the relative cost of pursuing different strategies. By considering the constraining effect of the *cordon sanitaire*, we can explain three anomalies of the Swedish case: (1) why the mainstream parties collectively converged on liberal immigration policies, despite the lack of voter demand; (2) why there was so little mobilisation for more restrictive policies by dissenting intra-party factions; and (3) why, following the electoral defeats of the 2014 election, proposals for more restrictive immigration policies were fairly modest.

By committing themselves to the *cordon sanitaire*, the parties made themselves vulnerable to the accusation that their policies were too similar to those of the Sweden Democrats. This meant not only that policy co-optation ceased to be a viable strategy, but also that the parties had an incentive to distance themselves from the SD. Even if convergence on liberal immigration policies was not in particularly high demand among voters, a perceived failure to abide by the *cordon sanitaire* was potentially damaging for a party’s credibility. In this way, the choice of issue-based strategy was reputationally constrained by the choice of non-issue-based strategy. A party that appeared to take an unprincipled or compromising approach to the radical right risked being punished by voters. This risk was intensified by the efforts of rival parties and of the media to focus negative attention on any inconsistencies between earlier commitments to isolation and subsequent behaviour. At the same time, party factions that favoured more restrictive immigration policies could not mobilise intra-party dissent, due to the career and reputational costs associated with violating the *cordon sanitaire*.

The outcome of the 2014 election gave a clear indication that the adversarial approach was not working as a vote-seeking strategy; however, it did not provide the parties with any legitimate reason to pursue an accommodative strategy instead. Due to reputational constraint, the parties with a strategic interest in pursuing more restrictive policies kept their proposals for reform modest and at a considerable distance from the Sweden Democrats. This all changed the following year, however, as the parties attempted to manage the events of the 2015 refugee crisis. Being perceived as requiring immediate and radical action – radical action backed by a majority of the parties – the refugee crisis constituted an ‘external shock’ that greatly reduced the costs of policy reform. Although Dahlström and Esaiasson (2013, p. 360)

have argued that a consensus among established parties to dismiss a potentially vote-gaining issue from competition is inherently fragile, the findings here suggest that reputational constraint can make for considerable stability. Parties can try to manage such situations, such as by replacing party leaders encumbered by commitments that are no longer strategically useful. However, if a strategy is sufficiently institutionalised, it may be that rapid change requires an external shock to legitimise a new course of action. I return to this idea in the next chapter.

Being based on a deviant case, the conclusions of this chapter have a number of theory-refining implications. First, they show that the adoption of an adversarial strategy need not be driven by an intention to boost support for the radical right in order to hurt a mainstream rival (Meguid, 2008, p. 31); instead, it can be part of a broader isolation strategy intended to hurt the radical right party. It may be true, as Meguid shows, that adversarial strategies tend to result in increased support for the radical right; however, my findings suggest a plurality of motives underlying the choice of such a strategy. Rather than being assumed, then, such motives need to be assessed empirically on a case-by-case basis. Second, while Meguid acknowledges that parties can be reputationally constrained by their past policy positions, I have shown that they can also be constrained by their non-issue-based commitments. This means that reputational constraint can account not only for policy stasis, but for directionally constrained policy change as well, as illustrated by the Swedish convergence on liberal immigration policies. Third, although issue-based and non-issue-based strategies are in principle independent of each other (van Spanje, 2018), the Swedish case shows that reputational constraint can serve as a mechanism driving alignment between the two.

Why then, one might ask, did reputational constraint have these effects in the Swedish case but not elsewhere? Due to the SD's lack of a reputational shield, Sweden may have been a case where conditions were particularly favourable for the formation of a *cordon sanitaire* – and for the reputational constraint on party behaviour that followed thereupon. Other conditions may also be discerned. Barrling (2016) argues, for example, that the Swedish convergence on liberal immigration policies was driven at least in part by the post-material values which characterise Swedish culture. Cultural explanations for cross-national variation tend to have an ad hoc character, but we can also consider how this factor interacts with party strategy. For example, the fact that the *cordon sanitaire* became such a powerful constraint in Sweden may be due in part to the culturally favourable foundation on which the parties erected it. However, the crumbling of the *cordon sanitaire* when it

became costly suggests, as we shall see in the next chapter, that strategic incentives nonetheless remain crucial for explanatory purposes.

Finally, the findings of this chapter have implications for the study of coalition formation. Given that parties can be reputationally constrained by previous commitments to isolate a given actor, this constraint should apply not only to the electoral arena but to the parliamentary one as well. We need, therefore, not only to consider how the SD affects coalition formation due to its size and policy positions; we must also consider the costs associated with the *cordon sanitaire*. That is the question to which I now turn.

7. The Determinants of Exclusion

In this final empirical chapter, I turn to the question of why the Sweden Democrats have been excluded from government cooperation at the national level. In considering this question, I make use of the insights acquired so far in this book. In chapter 4, I showed that the presence of the radical right at the local level affects patterns of coalition formation largely as predicted by coalition theory. Although the other parties are more inclined to cooperate across the left-right bloc divide when the SD has a pivotal position, the right is more likely both to govern as a minority and to rely on the (informal) support of that party. Chapter 5 provided a mechanism-based explanation for these patterns, showing how the formation of cross-bloc coalitions constitutes a strategic response related to the pursuit of policy, office, and votes. Although I found plenty of evidence of policy conflict with the Sweden Democrats, I argued that the almost complete lack of cooperation with the radical right at the local level can be explained at least in part by hierarchical constraint, in which such cooperation is prohibited by the party leadership.

In chapter 6, I set out to demonstrate empirically the presence of another kind of constraint, in which the parties' commitments to certain strategies make subsequent strategic changes costly: that is, the parties become reputationally constrained. I did so using a deviant case in the electoral arena: in Sweden, namely, the mainstream parties unexpectedly converged on liberal immigration policies when faced with the SD. I argued that, as these parties pursued the strategy of a *cordon sanitaire*, it became costly for them to retain policy positions proximate to those of the Sweden Democrats. A party accused by rival parties and/or the media of going after the radical right vote had an incentive to distance itself from the Sweden Democrats, lest it be punished by voters for appearing unprincipled and opportunistic. Stated otherwise, the presence of the *cordon sanitaire* constrained the strategic choices of the parties by putting their reputations on the line.

In this chapter, I address the question of whether or not the *cordon sanitaire* is crucial for explaining the exclusion of the Sweden Democrats from government coalitions at the national level. According to standard coalition theory, this should not be the case: anti-pacts against radical right parties only rule out coalitions which are highly unlikely to form in the first place – i.e., in cases where such parties lack the characteristics in terms of size and policy

positions needed to make them attractive coalition partners. As Sarah de Lange (2008) argues, radical right parties are not excluded from government because they are subject to anti-pacts; rather, anti-pacts are formed against radical right parties that do not qualify as potential coalition partners. This explanation relies on the structural factors of size and policy positions; accordingly, I refer to it as *the structural explanation*. If, however, we combine the insights of preceding chapters, we have a plausible account of how the presence of an anti-pact can in fact result in the formation of coalitions which exclude even a radical right party that has coalition potential in terms of size and policy positions. Due to previous commitments by mainstream parties to isolate the radical right, that is, the costs of discontinuing an anti-pact may exceed the benefits of including the radical right party in a governing coalition. I refer to this as *the reputational constraint explanation*.

In this chapter, I test the ability of these rival explanations to account for coalition formation in Sweden. Again, Sweden is of general theoretical interest here, given the strong parliamentary position of the Sweden Democrats, the polarisation between the left and right blocs, and the presence of a universal anti-pact against the SD. I test the explanations by analysing government formation following the three elections in which the SD's vote exceeded the 4% threshold for parliamentary representation: that of 2010 (Reinfeldt II), that of 2014 (Löfven I), and that of 2018 (Löfven II). To do so, I first construct a continuous measurement of anti-pact strength, in order to track changes over time. I then draw on coalition theory to derive coalition predictions based on different policy dimensions and criteria for what makes a coalition a winning one. Finally, I use the coalition formation mechanism identified in chapter 5 as an analytical framework for explaining variation between the three outcomes.

7.1. Analytical Framework

7.1.1. Analytical model and case selection

The theoretical arguments above can be translated into conditions necessary for inclusion of a radical right party in a coalition, as shown in Figure 7.1. Size and policy proximity are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for a party to have coalition potential.⁷⁴ The dashed arrow indicates that these

⁷⁴ Note that this definition of 'coalition potential' differs from Sartori's (1976), where coalition potential is entirely postdictive and refers to parties 'that have in fact entered, at some point in time, coalition governments and/or have given governments the support they needed for taking office or for staying in office' (p. 123).

two components are constitutive of coalition potential: i.e., they do not point to a causal relationship; rather, they indicate what coalition potential *is*. For the party to be included in a coalition, however, we also need for there to be no anti-pact in place. The solid arrow indicates a causal relationship whereby coalition potential and the absence of an anti-pact are jointly necessary for coalition inclusion. Granted, the presence of an anti-pact does not make inclusion of the party in a coalition impossible – only more costly (Strøm et al., 1994). Nevertheless, we would expect violations of an anti-pact to be sufficiently rare that we can retain ‘no anti-pact’ as a *nearly necessary condition*.⁷⁵ If coalition potential is lacking and an anti-pact is in place, exclusion is overdetermined; if these conditions are reversed, the case is uninteresting. The most interesting cases are the ones where we can observe the simultaneous presence of coalition potential and of an anti-pact – a configuration ruled out (or at least deemed unlikely) by the structural explanation.

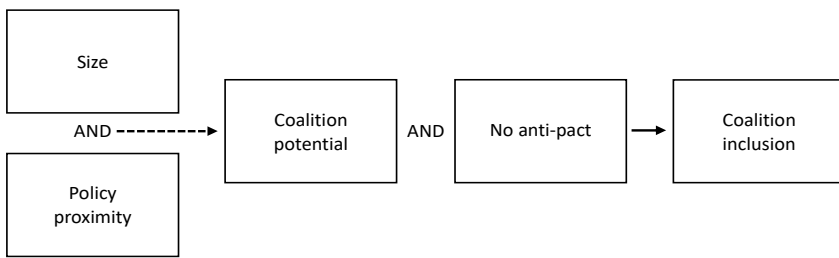


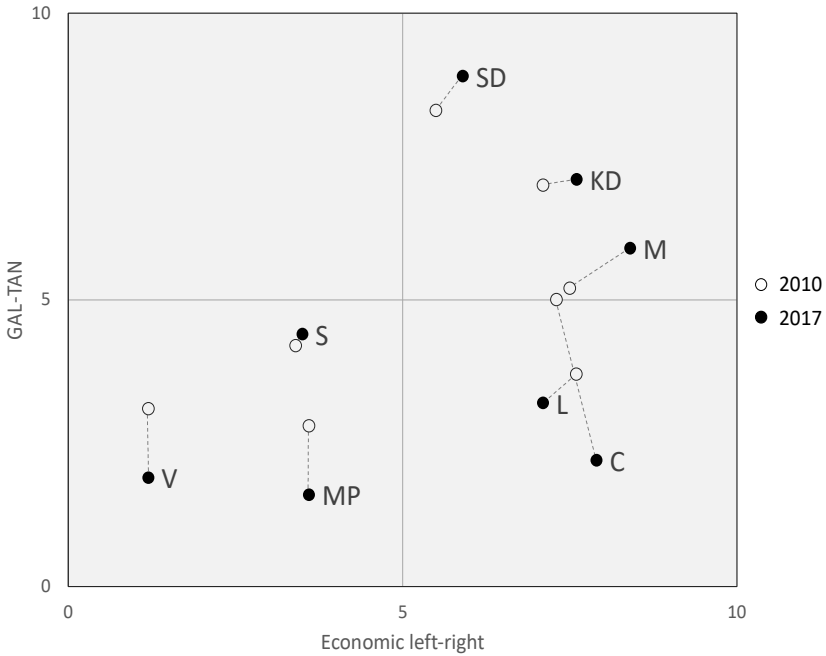
Figure 7.1. Necessary conditions for coalition inclusion

If operationalising the conditions in Figure 7.1 were a trivial matter, the identification of ‘deviant’ cases would be straightforward. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, however, the way in which these conditions are defined can have a fundamental impact on whether or not a given case fits the explanation. Labelling a case ‘deviant’ prior to the actual analysis therefore appears premature. I argue that the cases studied here have an *ex ante* high likelihood of displaying the configuration of interest; for lack of a better

⁷⁵ Indeed, in a cross-national study of 220 cases of government formation, Glasgow et al. (2012) find only a single instance of a coalition that contained parties subject to an anti-pact, meaning that this variable is an almost perfect predictor of non-inclusion. Anti-pacts can be seen as a subset of the more general phenomenon of pre-electoral commitments; however, since the government formation process is constrained by election results, only negative pre-commitments (i.e., anti-pacts) are likely to constitute anything close to a necessary condition. Note too that, due to hierarchical constraint, the ‘no anti-pact’ condition fails at the local level.

term, therefore, I refer to them as ‘crucial’ cases. As Harry Eckstein (1975) put it originally, cases are crucial when the empirical observations related to them are central for confirming or disconfirming a theory. In the same vein, Gerring (2007, p. 233) argues that ‘risky theories are amenable to crucial tests, whereas more open-ended theories are not’ (see also Blatter, 2012). Being based on necessary conditions, and therefore essentially deterministic, the model in Figure 7.1 lends itself well to the idea of crucial tests. Nevertheless, even if we can establish the simultaneous presence of coalition potential and of an anti-pact, we need not conclude from this that the structural explanation is ‘falsified’ – rather that we have identified scope conditions (Rohlfing, 2012).

I have chosen to analyse the three cases of government formation following elections in which the Sweden Democrats won seats in parliament: that in 2010 (Reinfeldt II), that in 2014 (Löfven I), and that in 2018 (Löfven II). These cases share many of the structural traits of the ones Sarah de Lange (2012) use to argue that the structural explanation applies to the radical right. In Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway, the mainstream right went from excluding the radical right to cooperating with it when its continued exclusion would have been costly (in the sense that cabinets on the right could not be formed without it). In Sweden, the formation of the Alliance in 2004 marked the start of a period of increased polarisation between left and right blocs (Aylott & Bolin, 2007, 2015), whereupon the relative cost of excluding seats on the right grew greater (cf. Bale, 2003). The SD controlled the balance of power between the left and right blocs following all three elections, meaning that a majority could only be achieved either by cooperating with it or by cooperating across the bloc divide. Figure 7.2 shows the parties’ positions in 2010 and 2017. The SD, as we see, takes an economically centrist position between the left and right blocs. On the vertical GAL-TAN dimension, by contrast, the party is by far the most traditional-authoritarian-nationalist party in the system. In the next section, I describe how these policy positions can be translated into a measurement of structural coalition potential.



Source: The 2010 and 2017 Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017).

Figure 7.2. Swedish party positions in 2010 and 2017

Given a minimalist definition of anti-pacts, the Sweden Democrats were clearly subject to a universal anti-pact in all three elections. In the previous chapter, I showed that parties can become reputationally constrained by such commitments in the electoral arena, and it is plausible that the constraint applies in the parliamentary arena as well. Furthermore, Sweden arguably qualifies as a case in which we are ‘least likely’ (Eckstein, 1975; Gerring, 2007) to observe the dissolution of an anti-pact, given the SD’s lack of a reputational shield. Stated otherwise, it should be less costly to end an anti-pact aimed at a party with a reputational shield, since one can reference its non-extremist origins. In sum, it is not obvious that the Sweden Democrats have lacked structural coalition potential, and it is plausible that the mainstream parties have been reputationally constrained by the anti-pact. For these reasons, the three selected cases are well-suited for testing the two rival explanations.

7.1.2. Data and operationalisation

Before turning to an analysis of the three cases, we need an operational definition of the two key concepts here: *coalition potential* and *anti-pact*. In their cross-national study, Martin and Stevenson (2001, pp. 36–37) define anti-pacts as ‘public commitments not to rule with some other parties’, and they measure them using a binary indicator. For Geys et al. (2006), who study coalition formation in Flemish municipalities from 1976–2000, the universal anti-pact against *Vlaams Blok* is a constant institutional constraint eliminating the party from the bargaining equation. However, since I focus here on a small number of cases, my use of the anti-pact concept need be neither binary nor constant. Instead I employ a minimalist definition – an anti-pact is a commitment not to cooperate with another party – after which I proceed inductively to refine the concept, using statements from party leaders in the media and in parliamentary debates. In so doing, I arrive at a continuous measurement of anti-pact strength, which informs the rest of my analysis.

For assessing coalition potential, on the other hand, I proceed deductively, with the help of coalition theory. Policy-oriented coalition theories are appropriate for this purpose, because they take both size and policy positions into account (corresponding to the necessary conditions in Figure 7.1). To the extent coalition theory predicts that a certain cabinet will be formed, I consider both criteria to have been met for all of the parties taking part. Coalition potential is thus understood as the ability of a given party to contribute seats that make a coalition a winning one (further discussed below) – a method in line with the approach used by de Lange (2012).⁷⁶ While coalition theory by no means has a perfect track record in predicting actual cabinets,⁷⁷ it allows for a systematic assessment of why parties prefer some coalition partners to others. To the extent the wrong cabinet is predicted, we have a baseline against which to judge this failure.

In this chapter, therefore, I use predictions derived from coalition theory as a heuristic tool for explaining the formation of the three coalitions under

⁷⁶ Twist (2019) proposes a similar if informal approach based on size and policy, where policy distances between the mainstream right and the radical right can be overcome by the fact that the two differ on which issues they consider most important. This approach may be useful for explaining why parties prefer one of the coalitions in a prediction set; however, Twist presents no precise criteria for how position and importance should be combined into an *ex ante* definition of coalition potential.

⁷⁷ In one of the most exhaustive empirical tests of coalition theory, Martin and Stevenson (2001) predict about half of the cabinets actually formed. Note, however, that the number of mathematically possible coalitions tends to be very high, being equal to $2^n - 1$, where n is the number of parties represented in parliament. In the Swedish case (with eight parties), this corresponds to 255 combinations.

study. I use party positions as estimated in the 2010, 2014, and 2017 Chapel Hill Expert Survey to compute coalition predictions for the 2010, 2014, and 2018 elections from the two main policy-oriented coalition theories: *minimal connected* and *minimal range*. Note that minimal range predictions rely on interval rather than ordinal data on party positions, making them more precise but also more sensitive to measurement error. To make the predictions fulfil their heuristic purpose, I vary the parameters on two points: the criterion for what makes a coalition a ‘winning’ one; and the policy content of the party positions.

Regarding the former, I first derive predictions based on a majority criterion. Coalition theory assumes that, *other things being equal*, parties will have a preference for majority status, since this allows them to win votes predictably. Not all parties need be included in the executive; a minority cabinet can rely on support parties instead, making it a ‘majority in disguise’. In this analysis, therefore, I consider formal support parties to be *de facto* coalition members. There are, however, both theoretical and empirical reasons why a majority criterion is not enough. First, other things may not be equal: the addition of more partners to a coalition comes at the cost of spreading office benefits more thinly and increasing the need for policy compromise. Second, Swedish cabinets have an overwhelming tendency to be minority ones, including all three of the cases included here.

Since ‘a coalition executive is winning as long as it is not losing’ (Laver & Schofield, 1998, p. 88), we may be able to identify viable minority cabinets when we see them. Here, however, I am interested in a theoretically justifiable criterion that predicts (a limited number of) minority cabinets. Based on the theoretical arguments in section 2.3.2, I propose the following definition: a *winning plurality* is a minority cabinet that controls more seats than any alternative connected coalition of opposition parties. Stated otherwise, winning pluralities are minority cabinets that face a divided opposition where neither side controls enough seats to be able to defeat the government in any given vote (without joining forces with the other side). The criteria here for being minimal connected or minimal range are the same as for majorities. Winning pluralities are ‘policy viable’ in the terminology of Laver and Schofield (1998, pp. 80–81). To narrow down the prediction set, however, the definition includes two additional criteria. First, it excludes majority cabinets, since the purpose is to predict minority ones. Second, it includes a plurality size requirement.

The viability criterion, as initially defined by Budge and Laver (1986), assumes that a cabinet must be supported by at least a plurality. In later work

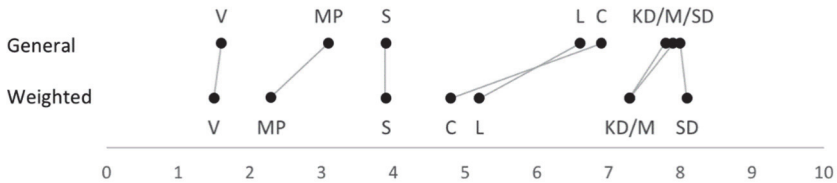
this was revised to refer instead to being able to survive a vote of confidence (Budge & Keman, 1993; Laver & Schofield, 1998) – which in the Swedish institutional setting means being tolerated (not necessarily supported) by an absolutely majority. Here I retain the plurality requirement, inasmuch as the cabinet must pass not only the investiture vote but the budget vote as well, in which a plurality of votes is needed. Assuming unidimensionality, this size requirement effectively means that a winning plurality will always contain the median party. The ideas underlying winning pluralities are implicit in much coalition research, but to my knowledge they have not been translated into a discrete cabinet type. The definition here allows for analytical symmetry in comparing minorities and majorities. Stated otherwise, it allows me to illustrate in a parsimonious way how our expectations on coalition formation change when we drop the majority criterion.

As for the policy aspect of coalition potential, the predictions used here rely on unidimensional measurements. This is conventional in coalition research, and it allows for the computation of ‘connected’ coalitions in which parties are adjacent along a dominant policy dimension. Given the Sweden Democrats’ combination of economic centrism and cultural traditionalism, as shown in Figure 7.2 above, one might doubt the validity of a unidimensional approach. I argue however that, although we need to consider both the economy and GAL-TAN, the two dimensions can be combined into a single measurement for purposes of my analysis.

In keeping with de Lange’s approach (2012), my first measurement consists of a ‘general’ left-right dimension. This general dimension, as estimated in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, is intended to condense political conflict into a single dominant ‘superdimension’. If all salient issues are well-correlated, we would expect a single dimension to work well for predicting coalitions. Still, we need to consider two potential difficulties. First, coalition predictions are highly sensitive to measurement error (Aylott & Bergman, 2011). This speaks for including predictions based on multiple dimensions. Second, as shown in detail in section 3.3.2, Chapel Hill’s general left-right dimension has questionable validity in the Swedish case. Specifically, party positions on this general dimension are much more strongly influenced by economic stance than by GAL-TAN position. At the same time, economic questions and GAL-TAN issues are estimated to be equally salient.

In addressing the problems above, I do not derive predictions from the general left-right dimension only. As an alternative measurement, I construct a *weighted left-right* dimension, which takes into account both economic and GAL-TAN issues. A party’s weighted left-right position is equal to the

average of its position on the economic and GAL-TAN scales, weighted by the salience attached to each of them.⁷⁸ The point of the weighted left-right dimension is that it is more transparent in how it combines different sub-dimensions into a single superdimension. Substantively, it means that the GAL-TAN dimension becomes more influential. To the extent that both the economy and GAL-TAN dimensions are important for structuring political competition, we would assume the weighted dimension to resemble the general left-right one. Although the two are highly correlated ($r=0.96$ for the three elections combined), some substantial differences can be noted. Figure 7.3 shows a comparison between the general dimension and the weighted left-right one, based on the 2017 estimates. The most notable difference is that the liberal GAL-TAN positions of the Centre Party and the Liberals serve to make them distinctly more centrist on the weighted dimension (see Table A.11 in the appendix for full results). As we shall see below, this has important implications for the predictions.



Source: The 2017 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Polk et al., 2017). *Notes:* Party positions on the general left-right dimension and on a weighted left-right dimension (see text for explanation), ranging from extreme left (0) to extreme right (10).

Figure 7.3. Party positions on general and weighted left-right dimensions (2017)

Finally, I perform a number of robustness checks related to the weighted left-right dimension. These include measuring the distance between the parties in each coalition as Euclidian distances in a two-dimensional space – i.e., treating the economic and GAL-TAN dimensions as independent of each other.

⁷⁸ An example: in the 2017 survey, C holds an economic position of 7.9, with a salience of 6.5; and a GAL-TAN position of 2.2, with a salience of 7.6. The formula for computing the weighted position for C is then $(7.9 * 6.5 + 2.2 * 7.6) / (6.5 + 7.6) = 4.8$.

Table 7.1. Summary of the 2010, 2014, and 2018 elections

Bloc	Party	Party name	Seats		
			2010 Reinfeldt II	2014 Löfven I	2018 Löfven II
Left (‘The Red-Greens’)	S	Social Democrats	112	113	100
	MP	Green Party	25	25	16
	V	Left Party	19	21*	28
	<i>Total</i>		<i>156</i>	<i>159</i>	<i>144</i>
Right (‘The Alliance’)	M	Moderate Party	107	84	70
	KD	Christian Democrats	19	16	22
	C	Centre party	23	22	31*
	L	Liberal Party	24	19	20*
<i>Total</i>			<i>173</i>	<i>141</i>	<i>143</i>
None	SD	Sweden Democrats	20	49	62

Notes: The Swedish parliament has a total of 349 seats, with 175 required for a majority. Seat counts in bold indicate government coalition parties. *Formal support party.

7.2. Analysis

7.2.1. Unpacking the anti-pact

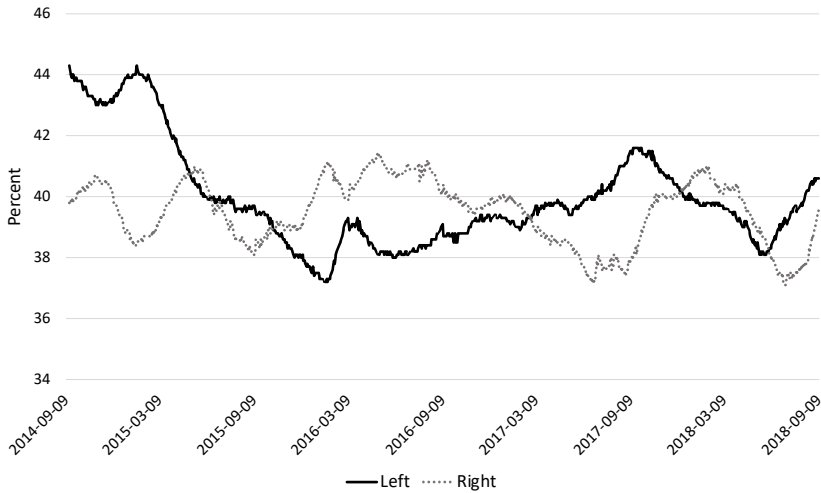
By a minimal definition, all of the parliamentary parties had anti-pacts – understood as commitments against cooperating with the Sweden Democrats – in place from the SD’s parliamentary entry in 2010 until the formation of the Löfven II cabinet in 2019. Nevertheless, unpacking this concept reveals nuances that are crucial for understanding government formation during this period. In 2010, the incumbent Alliance coalition lost its majority when the SD entered parliament and assumed a pivotal position between the two established blocs (see Table 7.1 for an overview). The institutional rules at the time did not require an investiture vote unless the prime minister resigned or was brought down in a vote of no confidence; the Alliance government could therefore remain in office. Prior to the 2014 elections, however, the party leaders in the Reinfeldt II cabinet committed to resigning if they won fewer seats than the parties in the left bloc, since they wanted to prevent the Sweden Democrats from exerting any influence (Reinfeldt et al., 2014). Delivering on this promise, the Alliance parties then abstained in the (now mandatory) 2014 investiture vote, thereby allowing the Löfven I cabinet to

take office.⁷⁹ With its pivotal position, however, the SD soon caused trouble for the government, blocking its budget. This led Prime Minister Löfven to declare his intention to hold a snap election, in order to resolve the parliamentary situation. This indicates that budget votes do indeed amount to de facto votes of confidence. As described in section 3.1.3, this episode culminated in the December agreement, which arguably constituted the peak of the coordinated isolation of the Sweden Democrats.

During the four years of the Löfven I cabinet, the universal commitment to non-cooperation started to weaken. First, the defection of the Christian Democrats from the December Agreement in October 2015 led to its dissolution, although this had no immediate consequences since the Alliance parties refrained from proposing a joint budget.⁸⁰ The following year, however, the party leaders of the Moderates and Christian Democrats – Anna Kinberg Batra and Ebba Busch Thor respectively – both stated in interviews that the Alliance should try to take executive power even though it was the smaller bloc (*Dagen*, 2016-09-01; *Svenska Dagbladet*, 2016-10-08). A government of this kind, however, would require active support from the Sweden Democrats in order to pass legislation opposed by the left bloc. For Liberal leader Jan Björklund, by contrast, it was ‘unthinkable’ for the Alliance to govern with active support from the radical right (*Svenska Dagbladet*, 2016-10-06). It thus became critical which bloc would win the most seats. As late as June 2018, three months before the election, the predicted vote difference between the two blocs was negligible (Figure 7.4), meaning that the Liberals and the Centre Party could retain a credible commitment to an Alliance cabinet. However, although the Liberals argued that cross-bloc cooperation would be necessary if the Alliance ended up holding fewer seats than the left bloc, the Centre Party ruled out both cross-bloc cooperation and dependence on the Sweden Democrats.

⁷⁹ A constitutional amendment dictating that an election be followed by an investiture vote came into effect after the 2014 election.

⁸⁰ With separate budget proposals from each of the four Alliance parties, none could defeat the government budget even with support from the SD.



Source: Tullgren (2019).

Figure 7.4. Voter support for the left and right blocs during the 2014–2018 term

In January 2017 Kinberg Batra weakened the anti-pact further, announcing at a press conference both that the Alliance should propose a joint budget – even if this meant bringing down the government – and that she wanted to loosen her party’s ban on communicating with the Sweden Democrats in parliament. She made clear that no negotiations with the SD would take place; rather, a kind of coordination would be instituted in the standing committees, to establish which policy proposals had the potential to gain majority backing. There was disagreement about this strategy among the Alliance parties, so Kinberg Batra’s proposal did not come to much. The Moderates, however, were declining significantly in the polls (Figure 7.4), and this was interpreted within the party as indicating uncertainty among voters about what the new strategy toward the Sweden Democrats would entail (*Aftonbladet*, 2017-02-09). This poor performance in the polls led to demands within the Moderate party that Kinberg Batra resign. In October 2017 she was replaced by Ulf Kristersson, who reverted for the time being to the previous posture of non-cooperation with the Sweden Democrats (*Dagens Nyheter*, 2017-11-01).

Table 7.2. A measurement of anti-pact strength

Indicator	Value
<i>I. Type of support</i>	
(a) informal passive	1.5
(b) informal active	1
(c) formal	0
<i>II. Type of cooperation</i>	
(a) none	2
(b) coordination	0.5
(c) negotiations	0
<i>III. Type of commitment</i>	
(a) formal	1.5
(b) informal	1
(c) none	0

Notes: Multiplicative measurement of anti-pact strength ranging from 0 to 4.5.

As this brief account shows, the nature of the anti-pacts established by the mainstream parties against the SD has changed over time. Drawing on these findings, I have devised a measurement of anti-pact strength using three different indicators, as shown in Table 7.2. Note that the position on the actual investiture vote was consistent during this period – with all four Alliance parties being willing to take office with either active or passive support from the SD, but being unwilling to make concessions to that party. By contrast, the parties differed in how strong a blackmail position they were prepared to offer the SD (see ‘type of support’ in Table 7.2). The distinction between being supported in the investiture vote and relying on active support throughout the entire term was well-illustrated when Jan Björklund addressed parliament in November 2018, explaining why the Liberals would vote against the investiture of an M+KD cabinet:

Even if the Alliance had been the largest bloc, the Sweden Democrats’ votes would likely have been required for the Alliance to form a government. But it would have been different, because after the investiture the Alliance would not have been dependent on the SD’s ‘yes’ votes in every important vote every Wednesday and Thursday for four years [...]. Either [such a] government

would be lured, tempted, or forced to negotiate after all, or it would repeatedly face great defeats in votes (Sveriges riksdag, 2018, pp. 5–6; my translation).

The distinction between active and passive support (i.e., abstention) in Table 7.2 thus refers to the kind of support needed from the SD in order to pass legislation opposed by the rival bloc. Unlike the Centre Party and the Liberals, the Moderates and the Christian Democrats came to perceive the risk of relying on active support as justified, given that the parliamentary situation granted them few other options in their pursuit of policy and office (Teorell et al., 2020, pp. 98–99).

The second indicator in Table 7.2 concerns ‘type of cooperation’, the distinction being that between coordination (as proposed by Kinberg Batra in 2017) and outright negotiation. The third and final indicator distinguishes between the informal commitment to non-cooperation that characterised most of this period and the formal commitment that was briefly in place during the December agreement (see ‘type of commitment’). By assigning numerical values to the different elements in Table 7.2 and multiplying the indicators into a measurement of anti-pact strength, I have calculated the changes for the 2010–2019 period, as illustrated in Figure 7.5.

The assigned values are somewhat arbitrary, but not inconsequential (cf. Goertz, 2006, ch. 4); here they serve mainly an illustrative purpose. Note that this means an anti-pact with a value of 4 should not be interpreted as ‘twice as strong’ (whatever that would mean) as an anti-pact with a value of 2. However, using multiplication to combine the three indicators does mean there are certain changes in the anti-pact (the elements with a value of 0) that cannot be implemented without ending it altogether, regardless of the values on the other indicators. I have assigned lower maximum values to indicators I and III, since I believe them to have less weight for the overall strength of an anti-pact as compared to indicator II. Furthermore, indicator II has a lower minimum non-zero value than the others (0.5), based on the assumption that the step from no cooperation to coordination is larger than that from coordination to negotiations.



Notes: Values based on the method of measurement set out in Table 7.2. (t₁) SD in parliament; (t₂) December agreement in place (after the elections and the formation of the Löfven I cabinet); (t₃) December agreement dissolved; (t₄) M and KD open up for active legislative support; (t₅) M opens up for legislative coordination; (t₆) M closes door to legislative coordination; (t₇) M and KD open up for legislative negotiations.

Figure 7.5. Anti-pact strength over time

Looking at Figure 7.5, we can conclude that all four Alliance parties had equally strong anti-pacts in place for the 2010 and 2014 elections, but that M and KD transitioned to weaker anti-pacts by the 2018 elections (see figure notes for details). In March 2019, after the formation of the Löfven II cabinet, KD leader Busch Thor announced that the demise of the Alliance and the new political landscape meant that her party would now be open to outright policy negotiation with the Sweden Democrats (*Aftonbladet*, 2019-03-21); KD thus became the first party to abandon the anti-pact altogether (t₇). In response, Ulf Kristersson announced the following day that the Moderates would be open to coordination with the SD (as they were briefly under the leadership of Kinberg Batra), but not for negotiations with it (*Svenska Dagbladet*, 2019-03-22). When Kristersson had first reversed the decision announced by Kinberg Batra (t₅–t₆), he argued that her announcement had been misinterpreted, and that it did not mean the Moderates would engage in unilateral coordination with the Sweden Democrats (*Aftonbladet*, 2017-

11-08).⁸¹ However, since Kristersson later adopted this very position (t_7), his claims of misinterpretation may have been an attempt to mitigate voter loss resulting from a strategy that was not credible at t_5 , but that became so at t_7 following the dissolution of the Alliance. Toward the end of 2019, finally, Kristersson invited SD leader Jimmie Åkesson to one-on-one policy discussions ‘on issues where the parties see eye-to-eye’; and for the first time he referred to the SD as ‘a party like the others’ (*Sveriges Radio*, 2019-12-04; *Dagens industri*, 2019-12-05).

The analysis above shows that it is useful to approach anti-pacts not as a dichotomy but as a continuous measurement. By the standard coding of anti-pacts, the approach to the Sweden Democrats would have been indistinguishable between parties and across elections. If the parties are reputationally constrained, we would not expect the anti-pact to be weakened, unless we can point to some factor reducing the cost of strategic change. At the same time, the Moderate ambivalence in terms of anti-pact strength (t_4 – t_6) is indicative of reputational constraint. For the Moderates, the cost of strategic change was drastically reduced when the Alliance was dissolved, because they now had a legitimate reason to pursue new avenues of political cooperation. Before drawing any conclusions about the merit of the reputational constraint explanation in relation to the three cases of government formation, we need first to address the structural explanation. To do so, we turn now to the coalition predictions.

7.2.2. Predicting coalitions

Results for the coalition predictions are shown in Table 7.3, together with the cabinets that were actually formed following each election. The table shows predictions based on both the majority and the plurality criterion, using both the general and the weighted left-right dimension. Only the minimal range predictions are shown here, since they yield a single prediction for each election together with a measurement of the policy range of the cabinet. The minimal connected predictions, while being less precise, provide highly similar results (see Table A.12 in the appendix). Note also that no distinction

⁸¹ Similarly, the parliamentary group leader of the Moderates, Tobias Billström, said shortly before the 2018 election that the Moderates had a strategy for governing as a minority even if the Alliance remained the smaller bloc – a strategy featuring coordination with the SD (*Dagens industri*, 2018-08-09). When this statement was criticised by political rivals as a reversion to the Kinberg Batra doctrine, Billström clarified that he was simply describing the realities of parliamentary work, and that nothing had changed in terms of the Moderate stance toward the Sweden Democrats (*SVT Nyheter*, 2018-08-10).

is made here between a party's being in government and its being a formal support party for a government.

Table 7.3. Minimal range coalition predictions 2010–2018

	Majority	Plurality	Actual cabinet
<i>General left right</i>			
2010	<u>C</u> +L+KD+M+ SD	<u>C</u> +L+KD+M	<u>C</u> +L+KD+M
Seats (range)	193 (1.4)	173 (0.3)	173 (0.3)
2014	<u>L</u> +C+M+KD+ SD	S+ <u>L</u> +C	V+MP+S
Seats (range)	190 (0.7)	154 (3.5)	159 (2.0)
2018	<u>C</u> +KD+M+ SD	MP+S+L+ <u>C</u>	MP+S+L+ <u>C</u>
Seats (range)	185 (1.1)	167 (3.8)	167 (3.8)
<i>Weighted left-right</i>			
2010	<u>L</u> +C+M+KD+ SD	<u>L</u> +C+M+KD	<u>L</u> +C+M+KD
Seats (range)	193 (1.6)	173 (1.2)	173 (1.2)
2014	<u>L</u> +M+C+KD+ SD	S+ <u>L</u> +C	V+MP+S
Seats (range)	190 (2.6)	154 (2.2)	159 (1.9)
2018	<u>C</u> +M+KD+ SD	MP+S+ <u>C</u> +L	MP+S+ <u>C</u> +L
Seats (range)	185 (3.2)	167 (2.9)	167 (2.9)

Notes: Composition of cabinets, including support parties. Parties ordered from left to right on the corresponding scale. Ordering and ideological range calculated from CHES 2010, 2014, and 2017. SD denoted in bold; median parties underlined.

I should again emphasise that the predictions presented here serve only as a heuristic device for illustrating how our expectations about coalition formation change when we adjust the winning criteria or the underlying policy dimensions. The winning pluralities match the actual cabinets in two cases out of three, but I am not arguing that this criterion should be used as a prediction tool. What the plurality predictions in Table 7.3 *do* show is that these cabinets can be derived from general principles of coalition theory. However, a more general viability criterion would result in a larger prediction set, where each winning plurality would be one prediction among several others (including majorities). That said, it is interesting to note that two of the coalitions that did form were winning pluralities. This suggests that, while the concept of winning pluralities may be limited for purposes of *prediction*, it is useful for purposes of *explanation*.

Starting with the general left-right dimension, all three predicted majorities in Table 7.3 consist of coalitions including the Sweden Democrats, together with three or four of the Alliance parties. These coalitions all have a narrow policy range, with a maximum of 1.4. This is less than half the range of any alternative majority coalition (not shown here). For comparison, note that the policy range on this dimension of the cabinet that was actually formed after the 2018 election – a cabinet which did not even contain enough parties to reach a majority – is 3.8. Based on these results alone, we would be at a loss to explain why the parties preferred a policy-diverse minority cabinet to a policy-cohesive majority one. As I see it, the results indicate that the general left-right dimension does not provide a good summary of political conflict.

Turning to the pluralities, we first observe that the Sweden Democrats are eliminated from the predictions (as well as from the minimal connected predictions in Table A.12). We see too that the 2010 and 2018 predictions match the cabinets that were actually formed. In both cases the cabinets are short of a majority, but the opposition is divided on the general left-right dimension. In 2010 this was possible while retaining a within-bloc cabinet, but not in 2018 (C occupied the median position in both cases). By shedding the Sweden Democrats, the 2010 cabinet trades its majority status for a plurality, but reduces its policy range. The 2018 plurality makes less sense on the general left-right dimension, since the plurality has a much wider range than the majority. The actual 2014 cabinet is even more anomalous, since it excludes the median party (L) which could have formed a very cohesive majority with the rest of the Alliance and the SD. Again, these findings cast doubt on the validity of the general left-right dimension.

To see how variations in dimensionality affect the predictions, let us turn to the weighted left-right dimension combining the economic and GAL-TAN dimensions according to their salience for each party.⁸² Based on a majority criterion, coalitions with the Sweden Democrats are still the most policy-cohesive. The main conclusion to be drawn from these results, however, is that the weighted dimension makes cross-bloc coalitions more attractive relative to coalitions including the SD in terms of policy range. This results from the fact that, with the exception of the Sweden Democrats, the

⁸² Due to the lack of data on salience in the 2010 survey, the weighted dimension for this election has been computed using positions from 2010 and saliencies from 2014. While this is not optimal, the absolute difference between using these saliencies and those obtained by a 'salience-agnostic' approach giving equal weight to economic left-right and to GAL-TAN is on average only 0.2 points, ranging from 0.0 (KD) to 0.6 (SD).

parties are less polarised along the GAL-TAN dimension. For the 2018 plurality prediction (and hence also the actual cabinet), the range is reduced from 3.8 to 2.9. This range is still not trivial, but consider the fact that the range of another minority that was briefly discussed during coalition bargaining – the Alliance together with the Greens – is much larger (5.0, not shown here).⁸³ Note also that on the weighted dimension, the 2018 plurality prediction has a narrower policy range than the 2018 majority. This difference is small, but it gives an indication of why a plurality might be preferred to a majority.

As a robustness check, I also compute the average Euclidean distance between the parties in the predicted coalitions in a two-dimensional (economic/GAL-TAN) space. I do this using three different measurements: the mean, the median, and the mode expert estimates of party positions. The inclusion of distances based on the median and the mode serves to reduce the impact of measurement error, since mean estimates have been shown to be sensitive to expert reliability (Lindstädt et al., 2020; Marquardt & Pemstein, 2018). As shown in Table A.13 in the appendix, Euclidean distances based on all three measurements mirror those reported in Table 7.3, with smaller distances for the pluralities than for the majorities. Note, however, that the computation of winning pluralities as defined here requires unidimensionality even for the minimal range predictions, since these rely on a logic of connectedness for the opposition. Finally, the unidimensional results are robust (in the sense that the pluralities are more policy-cohesive than the majorities) for computing the weighted left-right dimension using median or mode values (see Table A.14 in the appendix). The results of the robustness checks suggest that what is crucial for explaining the exclusion of the SD is the explicit incorporation of the GAL-TAN dimension, not the weighting procedure per se.

In sum, the results show that the exclusion of the Sweden Democrats can be plausibly explained by a lack of coalition potential in terms of size and policy positions. This suggests that, for explanatory purposes, the presence of anti-pacts is redundant. Furthermore, the interpretation that the anti-pacts were driven by policy differences is supported by the fact that, when the Moderates and the Christian Democrats had converged with the SD on

⁸³ This coalition was ruled out by the Moderates, who were unwilling to govern together with the Greens. The primary reason for this may have been policy conflict, but there were also office-seeking considerations. The Green Party demanded that such a coalition be led by Centre leader Annie Lööf, which the Moderates allegedly found unacceptable (*Expressen*, 2018-11-22).

immigration policy, they also started their transition toward weaker anti-pacts.⁸⁴ These results provide, then, stronger support for the structural explanation than for the reputational constraint explanation. Note, however, that this conclusion applies to the formation of the three cabinets studied here; it does not imply a wholesale rejection of the importance of reputational constraint in the parliamentary arena. I return to this distinction in the concluding section of this chapter.

7.2.3. Explaining variation

Despite the use of these alternative measurements, one anomaly remains: the 2014 Löfven I cabinet. To make sense of this case relative to that of the other two cabinets, I make use of the coalition formation mechanism presented in chapter 5 (see Table 5.5 on page 147). Specifically, I assess why this mechanism ‘failed’ in 2010 and 2014 (when no cross-bloc coalition was formed), whereas such a coalition was formed after the 2018 elections. For all three cabinets, both the initial condition (a *radical right party controls the balance of power*) and part 1 (*mainstream parties have a preference for within-bloc government*) were in place. As discussed above, I have found stronger support for the structural explanation than for the reputational constraint explanation. For this reason, I attribute part 2 of the mechanism (*mainstream parties refrain from cooperating with the radical right*) to a lack of coalition potential rather than to constraint in all three cases.

We can explain the absence of a cross-bloc coalition after the 2010 election with the absence of part 3 of the mechanism (*mainstream parties anticipate high costs of governing as a within-bloc minority cabinet*). For the Alliance these costs were low, because it held a plurality and no investiture vote was required. In 2014, however, both these conditions had changed, and the costs of minority government were higher. An Alliance cabinet would have had to pass an investiture vote and to be actively supported by the SD in any subsequent vote opposed by the left bloc, while the Sweden Democrats had vowed not to support any government which did not make concessions to them in terms of reduced immigration (Åkesson, 2014). At the same time, the costs of forming a cross-bloc coalition were also high. Having governed for eight years, the Alliance was the most successful centre-right government in Sweden for over a century. The cooperation it involved had been highly effective as an office-seeking strategy, and the Alliance parties were not keen

⁸⁴ The smallest distance between the SD and one of the other parties for 2014 is a staggering 7.2 points; for 2017 it is just 2.3 (see Table A.11 in the appendix).

on ending it. Indeed, Löfven's appeals for a cross-bloc coalition were seen as a strategy for breaking up the Alliance permanently in order to secure control of the executive for the foreseeable future (*Expressen*, 2014-12-08). In 2014, then, the mechanism failed in its fourth and final part (*mainstream parties pursue cost-reduction strategies to the extent that cross-bloc majority costs < within-bloc minority costs*), since the Alliance parties were unwilling to trade off the costs between the two alternatives. Instead they opted for a third: the December agreement.

The December agreement can be understood as a kind of 'institutional design' by which the parties 'enlarge[d] their strategy space and [chose] a previously unavailable option' (Tsebelis, 1990, p. 10). The purpose of the agreement was essentially to remove the SD from the coalition formation equation, allowing the larger of the two traditional blocs to govern as a minority. Stated otherwise, the agreement allowed pluralities to come to office (and to survive budget votes) as if they were majorities. The logic of this agreement can explain the formation of the Löfven I cabinet: if the SD is disregarded, then the cabinet will include the median party and cannot be defeated by any connected coalition of opposition parties – i.e., it will constitute the winning plurality. To account for the choice of this non-standard strategy, however, we need to explain both why it was *desirable* and how it was *possible*. The December agreement ensured predictability for the formation and survival of minority cabinets, with the one parameter determining which bloc would govern being their relative size. For the Social Democrats and the Greens, this meant they could remain in power at the cost of allowing the Alliance to govern in 2018 (if electoral fortunes were to change). For their part, the Alliance parties renounced the rewards of office in the short term, in the expectation that these could be had at a lower cost in the longer term. The agreement also removed the threat of a snap election – an unattractive outcome both for the Moderates (who were transitioning between party leaders) and the Christian Democrats (who were hovering dangerously close to the 4% threshold). Most importantly, perhaps, it kept the successful Alliance cooperation intact.

Nevertheless, the agreement was a possible strategy only to the extent it could be sold to voters as a reasonable response to the presence of the Sweden Democrats. That party had already been denounced as 'unlike the others'; however, when it violated established practice in the budget vote, an argument could be made that the rules of the game needed changing. In the words of Centre leader Annie Lööf, the December agreement was necessary 'because of the irresponsible behaviour of the Sweden Democrats, and

because they have followed the path of other European nationalist parties, the sole purpose of which is to create chaos and disorder in a parliament' (Sveriges riksdag, 2015, p. 61; my translation). In fact, the Alliance did not rule out the idea of codifying the principles of the agreement in law (Kinberg Batra et al., 2014). This quite radical solution bears less resemblance to what we normally regard as political conflict between rival parties, and more to a 'defending democracy' response to extremist parties (see, e.g., Bale, 2007; Capoccia, 2001; Downs, 2012; Minkenberg, 2006; Rummens & Abts, 2010).

Indeed the agreement was criticised as undemocratic, and there was intra-party disagreement about whether this option was in fact preferable (Bjereld et al., 2016, ch. 9). According to the former Moderate minister of defence, for example, the agreement meant that 'the opposition capitulates, and it does so unconditionally in promising to tolerate any and every proposal – no matter how crazy one finds it to be' (*SVT Nyheter*, 2014-12-28). The Moderate party secretary, on the other hand, deplored the portrayal of the agreement in the media as giving the red-green government free reign, arguing it was actually about establishing rules which would make political conflict possible (Bjereld et al., 2016, p. 271). The December agreement was perceived as the least costly alternative at the time, but the leaders of the Alliance parties arguably failed to anticipate its true costs in terms of intra-party conflict. Severe time constraints had led to a lack of preference aggregation, limiting the strategic capabilities of the parties involved. When unanticipated costs led to the premature dissolution of the agreement in October 2015, this 'third way' was closed.

By the time of the 2018 election, the Alliance parties had diverged along the GAL-TAN axis, with the Centre Party becoming more liberal and the Moderates more conservative (see Figure 7.2 on page 191). In this new political landscape, the policy range of the Alliance in GAL-TAN terms had become wider than that encompassed in the SD-KD-M span. SD leader Jimmie Åkesson argued that the latter three parties now constituted a 'new conservative bloc' that could become a good governing coalition. As described earlier, moreover, the Alliance partners had diverged in terms of their views on the Sweden Democrats, with Kristersson being defeated in an investiture vote for a proposed M+KD cabinet (Table 7.4). Centre leader Löf later attributed this decision in part to the Moderates' permissive attitude toward cooperating with the Sweden Democrats at the local level, as well as to Kristersson's lack of any convincing answer as to how the SD would in practice be deprived of influence in the event of a minority cabinet (*Omni*, 2019-07-04; Teorell et al. 2020, p. 114). Shortly thereafter, however, the

Moderates and the Christian Democrats managed to pass a joint budget proposal – to be administered by the caretaker government – with the help of the Sweden Democrats.

Table 7.4. Investiture votes following the 2018 elections

Date	Cabinet	Voted yes	Voted no	Abstained
25 Sep	S+MP	S+MP+V (142)	M+C+KD+L+SD (204)	
14 Nov	M+KD	M+KD+SD (154)	S+MP+V+C+L (195)	
14 Dec	S+MP	S+MP (116)	M+C+KD+L+SD (200)	V (28)
18 Jan	S+MP (+C+L)	S+MP (115)	M+KD+SD (153) ^a	V+C+L (77)

^aIncludes one dissenting C vote.

Due to the changes described above, a cross-bloc coalition was a more attractive option for C and L in 2018 than it had been in 2014. The negotiations for forming it were by no means simple; nonetheless, after yet another failed investiture vote, the Social Democrats and the Greens offered the Centre Party and the Liberals sufficient concessions (in a 73-point policy agreement) to secure their formal support. In addition to being a victory in terms of policy influence for latter two parties, the agreement reduced the vote-seeking cost of backing a prime minister for whose removal from office they had campaigned. To this end, they emphasised that this ‘January agreement’ was nothing like the unpopular December agreement. Whereas the latter had focused almost exclusively on form, the former was all about content. An Alliance cabinet was simply not viable given the parliamentary situation, yet this solution made the enactment of a ‘liberal reform agenda’ possible. With the cost of providing cross-bloc support now sufficiently reduced, the fourth and final part of the mechanism was in place.

Still, the four-party cross-bloc coalition – dubbed by its critics a ‘coalition of the unwilling’ – could not take office without the Left Party at least abstaining in its favour. Since the proposed cabinet was in closer policy proximity to it than the perceived alternative (M+KD supported by SD), the Left Party chose somewhat begrudgingly to abstain. In a weak sense, the Left Party could be considered a support party for the Löfven II cabinet, since its toleration of ‘the lesser evil’ was crucial in the investiture vote. Under negative parliamentarism, abstention equals passive support; it is less costly, however, in terms of party unity than is active support or opposition (Aylott & Bergman, 2011; Bergman, 1995, ch. 8). Judged by the voting record alone, the

Left Party is of course no different from the Centre Party or the Liberals; all three parties abstained in favour of the government. Were we to treat them all the same, the Löfven II cabinet could be appropriately classified as a 'majority in disguise'. I would argue, however, that there are strong reasons to treat only the latter two as support parties, and to regard the former as an opposition party instead.

Unlike C and L, the Left Party did not join the January agreement, nor was it offered any policy concessions in return for its support. Indeed the agreement explicitly stated, in what came to be known as the 'humiliation clause', that it was aimed at depriving the Left Party of any influence over Swedish politics. Pushing back, the Left Party announced that a few key proposals in the agreement were simply unacceptable, and that it would motion a vote of no confidence if the government attempted to implement them. As many commentators noted, this threat lacked a certain credibility, because it would require the Left Party to join forces with all of the remaining opposition parties – including the Sweden Democrats. Yet this scenario did indeed come to pass, in late 2019, when the opposition forced the government's hand under threat of a joint vote of no confidence against the minister of employment (*Aftonbladet*, 2019-12-09). Shut out from policy bargaining and reluctant to bring the government down, the Left Party risked the latter in order to exert policy influence while in opposition. In sum, the Left Party differs from the Centre Party and the Liberals – in terms of its motivation for abstaining in favour of Löfven II, and in terms of its subsequent behaviour as well. For these reasons, I argue, it is more appropriately classified as an opposition party, and the Löfven II cabinet as a winning plurality.

7.3. Conclusions

In this chapter, I have tested two rival explanations for the exclusion of radical right parties from government cooperation: that they lack coalition potential in terms of their size and policy positions (the structural explanation); or that the discontinuation of an existing anti-pact is prohibitively costly (the reputational constraint explanation). To test these explanations, I have assessed the coalition potential of the Sweden Democrats and the strength of the anti-pact in three cases of coalition formation (Reinfeldt I, Löfven I, and Löfven II). I have found support for the expectation that reputational constraint will matter not only in the electoral arena (as shown in the previous chapter), but in the parliamentary arena as well. However, I have also found that we need not invoke reputational constraint in order to explain

the exclusion of the Sweden Democrats. Stated otherwise, reputational constraint matters because it affects parties' ability to moderate the strength of their anti-pacts; but it is not crucial for explaining the formation of the three cabinets studied here. The SD held the balance of power between the left and right blocs, but its exclusion can be plausibly explained by reference to its size and its policy positions alone. I have shown, however, that the validity of this explanation is highly dependent on how these structural factors are translated into coalition potential.

In analysing the three cases, I have shown how variations in the winning criteria and the underlying policy dimensions affect our expectations about coalition formation. If majorities are required, the inclusion of the Sweden Democrats is almost inevitable, because such coalitions are more policy-cohesive than alternative coalitions. Relaxing the majority requirement, however, allows for coalitions with an even narrower policy range. As an alternative winning criterion, I have used the requirement that a minority government cannot be defeated by any alternative connected coalition of opposition parties. I have labelled these cabinets *winning pluralities*, and I have shown that the coalitions analysed here can be understood as such. Winning pluralities are cabinets that derive their viability not from control over a majority of seats (either alone or 'in disguise' with the help of support parties), but rather from divisions in the opposition. Parties in a divided opposition will have a difficult time agreeing on an alternative coalition; for some of them, backing the cabinet in an investiture vote may constitute 'the lesser evil'. When the opposition cannot agree, it is sufficient for a government to be viable that it constitute the largest coalition that does in fact agree – a plurality. If political competition is reducible to a single stable dimension, this can be defined *ex ante* in terms of connected coalitions. If not, the concept of a winning plurality may still have explanatory value. The idea is implicit in much coalition research, but I have found making it explicit to be useful for explaining coalitions in the Swedish case. Whether or not it is useful in other contexts remains an open question.

Where the dimensionality of political conflict is concerned, my findings call into question the validity of the 'general left-right' dimension as a measurement for explaining coalition formation. Specifically, I argue, this dimension as estimated in the commonly used Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017) fails to reflect ideological distances between parties in the Swedish case accurately. This indicates that, if coalition research is to limit itself to a single ideological dimension, it should include sensitivity analyses that assess how the results are affected by variations in

this measurement. ‘Mid-level’ dimensions, such as economic left-right and GAL-TAN, arguably constitute the sweet spot between concreteness (specific policy issues) and abstraction (general left-right), because they reflect broad patterns of political conflict while being somewhat transparent in terms of content – and therefore less susceptible to bias (cf. Bauer et al., 2017). The results reported in section 3.3.2 suggest that, while the experts may be accurate in estimating party positions and salience on the economic and GAL-TAN dimensions, their general left-right estimates are the result of a cognitive process that does not systematically reflect the content of these sub-dimensions.⁸⁵

In this chapter, I have proposed a *weighted left-right* dimension incorporating both sub-dimensions, according to position and salience. One could argue about the validity of such a dimension, but at a minimum it is consistent and transparent. Beyond the Swedish case, a weighted left-right dimension may work best as a summary of political conflict when its components correlate reasonably well with each other, as in the case of economic left-right and GAL-TAN in most of Western Europe (Rovny & Edwards, 2012). As my robustness checks indicate, average Euclidean distances between coalition partners on these two dimensions yield similar results. Nevertheless, one advantage with a weighted dimension – aside from its being an intuitive summary of political conflict – is that it allows for the computation of connected coalitions and of median parties, and for other uses that for technical reasons rely on unidimensionality.

By combining this arguably more valid measurement of political conflict with a winning plurality criterion, we can explain the exclusion of the Sweden Democrats in all three cases of government formation. We can also explain the composition of the Reinfeldt II cabinet and of the Löfven II cabinet. This leaves us with one anomaly: the composition of the Löfven I cabinet. Its formation was by no means surprising, given the pre-electoral commitments made by the Alliance parties. From the perspective of coalition theory, however, we are at a loss to explain why a minority coalition excluding the median party was allowed to form. This can be accounted for by the logic of the subsequent December agreement, under which the cabinet in fact constitutes the winning plurality. Finding the costs both of governing as a minority and of forming a cross-bloc coalition to be prohibitive, the Alliance

⁸⁵ While the use of anchoring vignettes may help for the assessment of cross-nationally comparable dimensions of political conflict, those employed by Bakker et al. (2014) are unlikely to solve the issue encountered here. In fact, their use of vignettes exclusively related to economic policy may actually exacerbate problems in the Swedish case.

parties opted instead to restore predictability to the coalition formation process, in the hope of reaping office rewards in the future at a lower cost.

Although I have argued that the SD's exclusion can be plausibly explained by structural factors, my findings also indicate the presence of reputational constraint. The Moderate attempt to weaken the anti-pact in early 2017, namely, was not credible in the eyes of the voters, and the party reverted to its original position in anticipation of the 2018 election. Nevertheless, this constraint had no causal efficacy in terms of excluding the Sweden Democrats, since after the elections, the parties for which the SD constituted a viable coalition partner in terms of policy (M and KD) did not have enough seats, even together with the SD. Then, when the Alliance was subsequently dissolved, the cost of reputational constraint was greatly reduced, because the Moderates now had a legitimate reason to pursue new avenues of political cooperation. The Centre Party also faced reputational constraint, having ruled out both cross-bloc cooperation and reliance on the radical right. This constraint was likely to have been more severe for the latter outcome, but so was the degree of policy conflict. A counterfactual can be imagined where backing the Löfven II cabinet was not in fact policy-preferable, in which case the same outcome could have occurred due to reputational constraint.

The findings above show that it is useful to approach the concept of the anti-pact not as a dichotomy but as a continuum. The measurement of anti-pact strength proposed in this chapter allows us to analyse subtler changes in the reaction of mainstream parties to the radical right – changes that would otherwise be lost. Given the poll numbers, the Moderates and the Christian Democrats would have had nothing to gain from discarding the anti-pact outright prior to the 2018 elections. It was highly unlikely that they would win a parliamentary majority together with the Sweden Democrats, and any talk of formal cooperation would have alienated their Alliance partners. To have any chance of forming a government, the Moderates and the Christian Democrats would have to walk a very fine line between the two – as reflected in their transition from a stronger to a weaker anti-pact. Not until after the formation of the Löfven II cabinet, when the Alliance had already split in two, did formal negotiations with the SD become an option. Note that the measurement of anti-pact strength was inductively developed based on the features most crucial to the Swedish case, so it may or may not generalise well to other cases. While such an assessment is beyond the scope of this study, the general approach of unpacking the concept may be analytically useful in other studies of mainstream party reactions to the radical right.

In the end, the findings of this chapter largely support the argument that radical right parties are ‘just like other parties’ when it comes to coalition formation (de Lange, 2012; Twist, 2019). Indeed, the Swedish case shows that a radical right party need not possess a reputational shield for mainstream parties to dissolve their anti-pacts when faced with certain strategic incentives. Since it is costly for such parties to do so, however, we should consider the potential effects of reputational constraint. The conclusion of the December agreement also speaks for acknowledging that actors’ time horizons may extend far beyond the present bargaining situation, and also that strategic action may result in high unanticipated costs. The December agreement proved an unviable strategy in the end, and the centre-right parties subsequently pursued divergent strategies vis-à-vis the radical right, in line with coalition theory. Sweden, it appears, is not an exception to the general European pattern. Rather, it is a case where the structural conditions necessary for catalysing the transition from isolation to government cooperation were not yet in place.

8. Conclusions

We have now reached the end of our enquiry into Swedish mainstream party reactions to the radical right. It is time to return to the claim, presented in the introduction, that Sweden has chosen 'a different path'. Based on the analyses in this book, we are now in a position to assess whether Sweden is indeed qualitatively different from other cases when it comes to how mainstream parties respond to the radical right. Moreover, if Sweden is in fact different in this regard, what are the implications for established theories of party behaviour? On the face of it, Sweden appears to be – or at least to have been – an outlier in a comparative European context. Throughout Europe, after all, we observe mainstream parties co-opting the policies of radical right parties and relying on them to form governments. In Sweden, by contrast, the radical right party in question – the Sweden Democrats – has remained excluded from coalition formation, despite a strong parliamentary position. For a long time, furthermore, the mainstream parties refrained from co-opting the SD's restrictive immigration policies, converging instead on liberal policies in that area. Swedish party behaviour also appears puzzling in relation to expectations derived from theories of spatial party competition and coalition formation, which are more consistent with the empirical trend observed across the rest of Europe.

This puzzling appearance notwithstanding, I have shown in this book that the response of the Swedish mainstream parties to the radical right can be explained in terms of the strategic pursuit of policy, office, and votes. This means that our explanation need neither adduce behaviour based on principles rather than on strategy, nor invoke the idea that 'pariah' or 'anti-system' parties are qualitatively different from other parties. To arrive at a strategic explanation, I have combined two research literatures that have tended not to communicate much with each other: that on coalition theory, and that on mainstream party reactions to the radical right. Drawing on these two literatures, I have analysed various aspects of Swedish party behaviour at the local and national levels, and in the electoral and parliamentary arenas.

In conclusion, I would argue, a satisfactory strategic explanation of Swedish mainstream party reactions to the radical right requires that we take three things into account. First, we need to consider how different types of party strategy interact. I have distinguished in this book between issue-based

strategies and non-issue-based strategies which mainstream parties employ vis-à-vis the radical right. Issue-based strategies relate to party competition in terms of policy positions, including for example the choice of whether or not to co-opt the restrictive immigration policies proposed by the radical right in an attempt to win back voters. Non-issue-based strategies involve such things as committing not to cooperate with radical right parties (i.e., establishing anti-pacts), with an eye to making them less attractive to voters. The two strategies are different in kind, but they have a shared purpose: the pursuit of votes.

Second, we need to consider the relevant constraints that parties face in their strategic decision-making. I have focused on two types of constraint in this regard: hierarchical and reputational. Parties at the sub-national level can be hierarchically constrained in their strategic decisions by their national party leaders, through the threat of sanctions. Reputational constraint, on the other hand, is found when parties' choice of strategy is constrained by the electoral costs of acting in a manner inconsistent with previous commitments. The two types of constraint impose different kinds of cost on parties, but they are functionally equivalent in how they affect the preference ordering of the strategic choices that parties make: that is, what would otherwise have been the preferred strategy of a party may become an unacceptable alternative due to the constraint in question.

Third, we need to reconsider how some of the theoretical concepts commonly used in coalition research are operationalised. In this book, I have considered the criteria for what makes a coalition a winning one; I have examined the dimensionality of political conflict underlying the coalition formation process; and I have addressed the question of how to measure anti-pacts.

This concluding chapter consists of three parts. I first summarise my main findings, based on the four research questions presented in the introduction. Second, I synthesise these findings into a unified strategic explanation of Swedish mainstream party reactions to the radical right. Third and finally, I discuss avenues for future research.

8.1. Main Findings

My first research question concerned *how the SD's presence has affected patterns of coalition formation*. If mainstream parties approach radical right parties as they would any other party for purposes of coalition formation, this should be observable not only at the national level but at the sub-national

level as well. An advantage of the sub-national level, moreover, is that it provides a large number of cases with excellent unit homogeneity on which to test theoretical expectations statistically. Thus, to answer this first research question, I turned to the local Swedish level and analysed coalition formation in 290 municipalities across three elections (2006, 2010, and 2014). Analysing the local level requires, however, that we consider the possibility that parties are hierarchically constrained by their national leaders in the coalition formation process. Following these three elections, there were no cases of coalition formation with the Sweden Democrats at the local level. In this part of my analysis, however, I remained agnostic as to the causes of this exclusion.

My results showed that, when a radical right party is systematically excluded from government cooperation, the patterns of coalition formation change largely as coalition theory predicts. Since parties in government value majority status (other things being equal), a pivotal position for the SD makes the other parties more inclined to form policy-diverse coalitions across the established left-right bloc divide. Radical right parties, however, are in closer policy proximity to the mainstream right than to the mainstream left, so we would expect them to prefer government by the right bloc, even if they themselves are not included in it. My results do indeed show that the Sweden Democrats are more likely to provide informal support for the right bloc than for the left bloc; accordingly, minority government by the right bloc is more likely in situations where the SD occupies a pivotal position. Left-bloc minority governments, on the other hand, tend instead to depend more on negotiating support from across the bloc divide in order to pass important votes (such as on the budget), essentially making them cross-bloc ‘majorities in disguise’.

My second research question concerned *how the SD’s presence has affected the process of coalition formation*. To answer this question, I used the statistical results above to guide the selection of a small number of cases for in-depth study. Analysing these cases, I developed a mechanism-based explanation for the patterns observed at the aggregate level. This explanation is in line with the predictions made by standard coalition theory: when the Sweden Democrats have a pivotal position, the other parties tend to form cross-bloc coalitions because cooperating with the Sweden Democrats is ruled out due to policy conflict, and because governing as a minority entails high costs. Minority government is costly in terms of policy, because the cabinet may not be able to pass its proposals; and it is costly in terms of votes, if the cabinet’s difficulty in getting its proposals passed makes it appear weak.

These costs apply even to local party branches for which cooperation with the Sweden Democrats is not ruled out due to policy conflict, because they are hierarchically constrained by their party leaders from negotiating such support. In the case of cross-bloc coalitions, by contrast, the parties can pursue cost-reduction strategies. These include negotiating policy programmes where all of the parties taking part receive policy pay-offs on their profile issues, and alternating or increasing the number of office rewards to enable a fair distribution among the parties. My findings also suggest that competing for office in a political context where such rewards are scarce (the local level) works against the formation of cross-bloc majorities.

The proposed mechanism focuses on a few key aspects of the coalition formation process, and it proceeds at a level of abstraction more general than the individual case. In this way, I have intended it to be useful for analysing other cases of government formation in situations where the established coalition patterns would result in a blackmail position for the radical right. By identifying how and why the mechanism ‘fails’, it can be used as an analytical framework accounting for a multitude of outcomes. This mechanism may not be valid for all cases and contexts, but it contributes to an analytical ‘toolbox’ useful for research on coalition formation and mainstream party reactions to the radical right. As a first test of its applicability beyond the cases from which it was derived, I used the mechanism to explain variation in coalition outcomes at the national level (see below).

In my third research question, I asked *why the mainstream parties in Sweden refrained from co-opting the policies of the Sweden Democrats, and instead converged on liberal immigration policies*. To answer this question, I made use of the spatial theory of party competition between mainstream parties and niche parties proposed by Bonnie Meguid (2005, 2008). By analysing a puzzling case, I have addressed the need to ‘explore those factors that constrain a party’s ability to implement the seemingly optimal tactics’ (Meguid, 2008, p. 104). In so doing, I have identified aspects of Meguid’s theory that need refinement.

In my analysis, the key to explaining the Swedish puzzle lies in reconsidering the role played by reputational constraint. Specifically, we need to acknowledge that reputational constraint applies not only in the case of issue-based strategies, but in that of non-issue-based strategies as well. Having established the *cordon sanitaire*, the mainstream parties became vulnerable to accusations of not being sufficiently committed to isolating the radical right. This created incentives for the parties to distance themselves further from the Sweden Democrats. If a failure to abide by the principles of the

cordon sanitaire was (perceived as) electorally costly, we can explain why the mainstream parties converged on liberal immigration policies despite the scant demand among voters for such a convergence. In other words, the parties' choice of issue-based strategy (policy adaptation) was reputationally constrained by their earlier choice of non-issue-based strategy (the *cordon sanitaire*).

Based on these findings, I have argued that reputational constraint can explain not just policy stasis but directionally constrained policy change as well. This is illustrated by the mainstream parties' adoption of a joint adversarial strategy toward the radical right – an outcome that cannot otherwise be explained by Meguid's theory. The Swedish case also shows the need for careful attention to the ways in which issue-based and non-issue based strategies interact. The two types of strategy may be independent in principle, but my findings indicate how reputational constraint can serve as a mechanism driving alignment between the two.

These findings also show that the adoption of adversarial strategies need not be driven, *pace* Meguid, by the aim of boosting niche party support in order to hurt a mainstream rival. My findings are consistent with the expected outcome of adversarial strategies (increased niche party support), but I find no evidence to suggest that the proposed motive is valid. As noted above, I have attributed the adoption of a joint issue-based strategy to reputational constraint resulting from a commitment to the non-issue-based strategy of the *cordon sanitaire*. As for the motive underlying the formation of the *cordon sanitaire*, I have argued that the aim was to make the SD less attractive to voters, by discrediting the party and signalling that it would have no direct policy influence. The observation that the strategy failed is problematic only if we assume instrumentally rational actors to be infallible. My analysis of a single case gives no indication of how well this motive generalises, but it does show that the intentions underlying the adoption of adversarial strategies – issue-based and non-issue-based alike – should be empirically verified rather than assumed.

My fourth and final research question concerned *why the SD has been excluded from government cooperation despite its pivotal position*. To answer this question, I analysed the three cases of national government formation that have occurred since the Sweden Democrats entered parliament (following the elections of 2010, 2014, and 2018). According to standard coalition theory, radical right parties are excluded from coalition formation because they lack the traits in terms of size and policy positions that would make them attractive coalition partners. However, having established that

parties can become reputationally constrained, I proposed a plausible alternative explanation for the exclusion of the radical right: even if such a party acquires coalition potential in terms of size and policy positions, the reputational costs of ending an anti-pact may outweigh the benefits of governing with the radical right.

To test the reputational constraint explanation, I developed a continuous measurement of anti-pact strength to assess changes over time. I found evidence that some parties were indeed reputationally constrained, in that they backed down from weakening their anti-pacts in ways that lacked credibility given their earlier commitments not to cooperate with the radical right. I also found, however, that these constraints made no difference in terms of coalition formation, because the exclusion of the Sweden Democrats can be plausibly accounted for by size and policy positions. My findings thus support Sarah de Lange's (2008, 2012) argument that coalition formation in the presence of radical right parties can be explained using standard theories of coalition formation. Doing so requires, however, that we make use of a valid dimension of political conflict and of an appropriate criterion for what makes a coalition a winning one. In this book, I have shown how the formation of *winning pluralities* – minority coalitions that control more seats than any alternative connected coalition – constitutes a viable (but not necessarily effective) alternative to cabinets that rely on support from the Sweden Democrats. Unlike minority cabinets that are 'majorities in disguise', winning pluralities derive their viability not from reliable support parties, but rather from a divided opposition unable to join forces against the government. The idea of winning pluralities is implicit in much coalition research, but an explicit concept is useful for explaining coalitions in the Swedish case, and potentially elsewhere.

I have furthermore found it necessary to take into account more than just a general left-right dimension of political conflict. I have thus proposed a *weighted left-right* dimension, which incorporates positions on both the economic and the GAL-TAN dimensions according to salience. My results suggest that this is a more valid measurement for explaining recent coalitions in Sweden. More generally, my findings speak strongly for conducting extensive sensitivity analyses when using policy positions to make coalition predictions. In the Swedish case the Löfven I cabinet remains an anomaly, in that it excludes the median party whichever dimension is used. It is, however, a case that makes sense if we consider the (self-imposed) constraints of the December agreement. On the other hand, the choice of this non-standard strategy can only be understood by acknowledging strategic time horizons

that extend far beyond the present bargaining situation. We need, namely, not only to examine how the pie is divided in the here and now; we must also consider the parties' prospects for acquiring pie in the future.

Based on these findings, I conclude that Sweden should not be considered a deviant case with regard to government formation in the presence of the radical right. Instead, the required conditions in connection with size and policy positions have not yet been in place to make the Sweden Democrats a viable coalition partner or support party. However, both structural changes in Swedish party competition and the behaviour of the mainstream right suggest this is only a matter of time. If parties are strategic actors that are at least partly interested in office, this should come as no surprise.

8.2. Isolating the Radical Right – A Strategic Explanation

In this section, I pull together the findings above to propose a unified strategic explanation for Swedish mainstream party reactions to the radical right. In so doing, I show how the same fundamental mechanisms of party behaviour apply across different levels and arenas. I also contend that the Sweden Democrats should not be considered qualitatively different from other parties where strategic interaction is concerned.

When challenged by the Sweden Democrats, the mainstream parties initially responded by persisting in the dismissive approach that had served them well in the past. Thus they largely ignored the radical right, in an attempt to deny it legitimacy. Then, when this failed to stop the SD from making further electoral inroads, they resorted to a joint (if uncoordinated) strategy of trying to discredit the party as being 'unlike the others'. This also meant ruling out all kinds of cooperation or negotiation. In other words, the mainstream parties formed a *cordon sanitaire* against the radical right. As a vote-seeking strategy, the *cordon sanitaire* was intended to reduce the electoral appeal of the Sweden Democrats. Since the SD's radical policy positions made it an unattractive coalition partner, this strategy came at no real cost (initially) in terms of office-seeking, since it only ruled out coalition options which the mainstream parties were unlikely to pursue in any case.

For the *cordon sanitaire* to be an effective electoral weapon against the radical right, it needed to be credible. To ensure credibility, the parties made sure it was also enforced at the sub-national level. National party leaders had the ability to override the preferences of sub-national party branches. Local party organisations for which the SD constituted a viable coalition partner were thus hierarchically constrained from engaging in cooperation with it. If

municipal party representatives indicated an intention to violate the *cordon sanitaire*, the national level would intervene and use sanctions to force them into line. Although policy conflict is a regularly occurring factor underlying the exclusion of the Sweden Democrats at the local level, hierarchical constraint can help explain the almost complete absence of cooperation with the radical right in a setting where a non-trivial share of the mainstream-right elite favours such cooperation.

At the national level, parties are autonomous from hierarchical constraint, but they still face constraint of the reputational kind. In the electoral arena, the commitment to the *cordon sanitaire* ruled out policy co-optation as a credible strategy: if the SD was as despicable as the mainstream parties claimed, how could they adopt policy positions similar to those which it took? Having established the *cordon sanitaire*, the mainstream parties became vulnerable to accusations of not being sufficiently committed to isolating the radical right. This created incentives for the parties to distance themselves further from the SD, converging on liberal immigration policies in order to deflect such accusations. In other words, the parties' choice of issue-based-strategy (policy adaptation) was reputationally constrained by their earlier choice of non-issue-based strategy (the *cordon sanitaire*).

The *cordon sanitaire* had a constraining effect not just in the electoral arena but in the parliamentary one too. In the spring of 2017, the Moderates tried to soften their policy of non-cooperation with the Sweden Democrats, by allowing for coordination in parliamentary standing committees. Their strategic incentive for so doing was to show voters that they were an active opposition party that was not afraid to force the hand of the government if there was majority support in parliament (including the SD's MPs) for doing so. However, given the party's history of commitment to the *cordon sanitaire*, this move lacked credibility. Polls showed that the voters were not impressed, and the Moderates reverted to their original position, having been reputationally constrained.

The presence of constraint does not mean that parties can never change their strategies – only that so doing can be costly. It also means that change is likely to come about when these costs are in some way significantly reduced. In the electoral arena, losses in the 2014 election had already provided a party such as the Moderates with an incentive to pursue more restrictive immigration policies; however, reputational constraint had kept these proposals fairly modest. The events of the refugee crisis in 2015, however, reduced the cost of pursuing an alternative strategy greatly. This 'external shock' provided the parties with a legitimate reason for acting

against their previous commitments, and made accusations of opportunism lose much of their force. The parties could thus implement rapid and radical changes in their immigration policies.

Due to these changes, the political landscape had changed drastically by the 2018 election. The four parties in the centre-right Alliance had become polarised on the GAL-TAN dimension, with the Moderates and the Christian Democrats approaching the Sweden Democrats, while the Centre Party and the Liberals had positions closer to the Greens and the Left. The GAL-TAN dimension had also taken on a salience equal to that of the economic dimension, complicating the coalition formation process. In this new landscape, the Sweden Democrats remained an unattractive partner for the Centre and the Liberals. However, since the Alliance parties held fewer seats than the left bloc, they had no prospects of forming a viable government without relying on (informal) support from the radical right. The Moderates and the Christian Democrats, for their part, harboured hopes of such support, so they could not risk provoking the Sweden Democrats by enforcing the *cordon sanitaire* strongly at the local level. The threat of sanctions from national party leaders thus lost its credibility, reducing the costs associated with hierarchical constraint, and enabling the formation of a (small) number of formal coalitions with the Sweden Democrats after the 2018 election. The Swedish case shows that, although the local level may serve as a ‘testing ground’ for innovative coalitions, this can also have an adverse effect at the national level: the Moderate failure to enforce the *cordon sanitaire* at the local level contributed to the Centre Party’s decision not to support an M-led minority government in 2018.

In this new political landscape, it made strategic sense for the Centre Party and the Liberals to support a government consisting of the Social Democrats and the Greens (the Löfven II cabinet) rather than a conservative (M+KD) government relying on support from the Sweden Democrats. Choosing to support a government against which they had actively campaigned was by no means free of cost in terms of reputational constraint, but reliance on the radical right would not have been either. Crucially, moreover, the government and its support parties were more policy-cohesive than a coalition between the mainstream centre-right and the radical right would have been, if the GAL-TAN dimension is taken into account. This means that, although there is evidence that some parties were reputationally constrained in their behaviour toward the Sweden Democrats (as described above), such constraint need not be invoked in order to explain the formation of the Löfven II cabinet.

When the Löfven II cabinet was formed in January 2019, this marked the end of the centre-right Alliance. With their former partners taking up cross-bloc cooperation, the Moderates and the Christian Democrats had few remaining avenues for cooperation save with the radical right. Accordingly, the Christian Democrats announced shortly after the government was formed that they were prepared to enter policy negotiations with the Sweden Democrats, thereby becoming the first party to abandon the *cordon sanitaire* unambiguously. In December 2019 the Moderates followed suit, thereby implementing the strategic change from which they had backed down in 2017. Now the Alliance was no more, so the Moderates had a legitimate reason to explore new venues for political cooperation, making cooperation with the radical right an easier sell to voters. In other words, the demise of the Alliance reduced the costs associated with reputational constraint, and made a new course of action possible.

Note that all three instances of constraint reduction came about through causes external to the actors being constrained: at the local level, because of the strategic decisions of national party leaders; in the electoral arena, because of the events of the refugee crisis; and in the case of the *cordon sanitaire*, because of the choice of the Centre Party and the Liberals to leave the Alliance. In terms of reputational constraint, parties are of course to some degree masters of their own fate: ‘In the long run [...], a party that can bind itself to a particular strategy can also unbind itself’ (Strøm et al., 1994, p. 319; see also Elster, 2000.) Parties can replace leaders who have become encumbered by reputational constraint, or try in different ways to convince voters that what was previously unthinkable now makes sense. Moderation on the part of the radical right – a zero-tolerance policy toward extremism and racism, for example – may also help them in doing so. Even the march of time alone is likely to help, as extremist legacies become ever more distant. Still, such changes are unlikely in themselves to provide mainstream parties with a slam-dunk argument in favour of cooperation in the short term. In this book, I have focused on factors that facilitate rapid change. As described above, I have identified two such factors: the strategic decisions of rival parties, and external shocks. This means that the absence of such factors can help explain why a puzzling party strategy remains in place even when we would expect the party in question to have a preference for change.

A party like the others?

Strategic behaviour of the kind described above is not peculiar to mainstream party reactions to the radical right. Any party can make use of both issue-

based and non-issue-based electoral strategies against any kind of rival party. Hierarchical constraint can be in place for a number of different reasons, and reputational constraint applies in principle to all policy positions and all kinds of pre-electoral commitment. In this sense, the conclusions of this book support the argument that radical right parties are not qualitatively different from other parties (Mudde, 2010). Still, there are reasons to suppose that anti-pacts are more likely to be put in place against radical right parties, simply because their radical ideologies make it easier for rival parties to rely on principled ‘defending democracy’-type arguments for excluding them. It is also likely that the costs of reputational constraint will be particularly high if such arguments are made.

Due to the Sweden Democrats’ lack of a reputational shield, Sweden may have been a case where conditions were particularly favourable for the formation of a *cordon sanitaire*, and for the mainstream parties to become reputationally constrained. I have shown, however, that a party’s status as a ‘pariah’ can change rapidly when mainstream parties find this to be to their advantage. This shows that, although the lack of a reputational shield is likely to result in stronger reputational constraint for mainstream parties, such a shield is not a necessary condition for cooperation with the radical right. Stated otherwise, even a party that has been isolated for alleged racism and extremism can become a viable coalition partner given certain strategic incentives, and given a sufficient reduction in the costs of reputational constraint. This suggests too that we should be sceptical of arguments claiming that cooperation with certain radical right parties is ‘impossible’.

The findings in this book indicate that the concept of a political ‘pariah’ should refer not to a type of party, but rather to a type of strategy. In other words, whether or not a party is a pariah has less to do with its characteristics, and more to do with the strategic incentives of rival parties. In this perspective, the idea of pariah parties has little analytical utility beyond that of the more value-neutral concept of the anti-pact. However, I argue as well that the anti-pact concept should be used in a manner going beyond binary and static measurements. In this book I have developed such a measurement, revealing that parties attempt to adjust the ‘strength’ of their anti-pacts according to strategic circumstances. Stated otherwise, parties are careful to moderate their commitments against cooperation prior to actually engaging in cooperation. To reduce the cost of reputational constraint, parties will attempt to provide voters with legitimate arguments for such a change. As indicated by the Moderates’ reversal in 2017, however, they need not be successful in so doing. The anti-pact measurement used here was inductively

constructed from key features of the Swedish case, so it may not be generalisable without modification. Nevertheless, it constitutes a first step toward a more fine-grained analysis of anti-pacts, yet one that retains the potential to be used in quantitative analyses.

Finally, while the findings in this book do not rule out the possibility that parties will act out of principle, they do show that principled behaviour cannot account for all observations – whereas strategic behaviour can. The most problematic aspect of an explanation based on principled behaviour is that principles ought to remain relatively stable over time. For example, it is difficult to explain why principles should cease to apply following an electoral defeat or the loss of a coalition partner. This assertion is complicated somewhat, however, by the fact that political parties are in fact collective actors with an unstable composition and set of preferences. This means we cannot conclusively refute the argument that some of the mainstream parties *used* to have a principled aversion to cooperating with the radical right, and that this later changed. Nevertheless, given that the parties in question acted strategically when it became costly to do otherwise, we can confidently state that a strategic perspective is sufficient for explaining Swedish mainstream party reactions to the radical right.

8.3. Avenues for Future Research

Like all studies, this book has focused on certain analytical perspectives and not others. For example, although I have acknowledged the effects of intra-party conflict on the strategic decision-making of parties, I have not analysed systematically how goals and preferences differ across actors within a party. For this reason, I have focused on how parties are reputationally constrained vis-à-vis voters, but not on how party leaders are constrained by members (such as through decisions taken by a party congress). A closer look at the internal arena of parties could reveal aspects of strategic party behaviour that have gone unnoticed in this book. Similarly, I have focused primarily on mainstream party reactions, rather than on the strategic behaviour of the radical right. The latter, of course, is an important object of study. Again, shifting the focus may reveal important insights that complement the findings in this book.

The mechanism-based explanation of coalition formation developed here is intended to be useful beyond the specific case(s) from which it is derived. I have shown that it can travel between local and national levels in Sweden, but the question of its applicability beyond the Swedish context requires

further research. For this purpose, it may for instance be helpful to study the reaction of mainstream parties to the radical right party Alternative for Germany, at the national and/or sub-national level. Such an analysis might also provide insights into the effects of reputational constraint in a context where the associated cost are high not primarily because of the historical legacy of the radical right party in question (as in Sweden), but rather because of a political culture where far-right politics are particularly stigmatised. More generally, the findings of this study may be helpful in explaining both the exclusion and the inclusion of radical right parties without reference to country-specific factors.

The findings in this book also point to a need to analyse not just how institutions affect coalition formation in a static sense, but also how interactions with these institutions vary over time. For the period studied here, the tools available to the opposition to influence policy have been constant in a constitutional sense, yet my findings show that their use has changed. This likely reflects a changing pattern of coalition formation at the national level in Sweden, from majority government in disguise to winning pluralities. Since a divided opposition facing a winning plurality cannot agree on a replacement cabinet, it will aim to exert as much policy influence as possible without actually bringing the government down. To this end, opposition parties make increased use of parliamentary resolutions (*tillkännagivanden*) against the government (Bolin & Larue, 2016); they threaten votes of no confidence aimed at influencing policy rather than at forcing resignation; and they push the boundaries of established parliamentary practices. Exploring such variations in oppositional influence should be a promising avenue for future research.

The discussion above also indicates a need to refine the concept of a support party. Restricting the definition to cases of formal agreement or support in an investiture vote limits the applicability of the concept, although in different ways (Bäck & Bergman, 2016; Strøm, 1990a). In this study, I have presented arguments regarding the status of support parties based on motives and behaviour, but this is possible only in a small-*n* setting, and it does not reflect more generally applicable criteria. Support party status cannot be inferred from legislative behaviour alone, because a strategic government will propose bills that it expects will pass, which biases the observations (Sundell, 2015). However, since parliamentary resolutions aimed at forcing the government's hand are initiated by the opposition, they are not affected by this problem. We may therefore distinguish, among formal opposition parties, between those that actively oppose the government and those that do

not. Such behaviour could potentially be used to construct a non-binary measurement of ‘support party-ness’. While equivalents of Swedish resolutions can be found in other parliamentary democracies (Bolin & Larue, 2016), they may not be sufficiently comparable to be useful for purposes of cross-national measurement. Nevertheless, exploring this possibility may offer a promising way forward.

Although I have argued that the exclusion of the Sweden Democrats from government cooperation can be explained by reference to insufficient coalition potential in terms of size and policy, my findings do suggest that standard measurements of policy positions (weighted or otherwise) may not accurately capture the full extent of the political conflict between the radical right and the mainstream. An alternative approach that might be useful would be to assess the parties’ ‘policy horizons’ (Warwick, 2005), where the policy difference vis-à-vis some parties may mean they are simply beyond the pale for purposes of cooperation, regardless of the absolute distance. Note that this does not mean the party is a pariah in a static sense; rather, it implies that the party may become a coalition partner following policy convergence on the relevant dimensions. Yet another approach would be to measure conflict in terms of ‘affective polarisation’, which is driven not by policy differences but by a dislike of certain political opponents as a social group (Baumann et al., 2017; Iyengar et al., 2012). Nevertheless, in view of the findings in this book, I would expect such dislike to abate if the rival party becomes a crucial ally in the pursuit of party goals.

Another aspect that needs further study concerns the observation that radical right parties can have an indirect effect on policy output (Schain, 2006). In one of the municipalities studied here, for example, mainstream party representatives argued that granting the Sweden Democrats a pivotal position would allow them to ‘influence politics in a more xenophobic direction’. While the SD has indeed been shown to have an effect on municipal policy (Bolin et al., 2014; Tyrberg & Dahlström, 2017), we know little about the underlying mechanisms involved. The most likely candidate, I would argue, is that the mainstream parties adapt their proposals to make them more likely to gain the SD’s support. This need not involve actual bargaining; rather, it may rely on unilateral communication from the radical right. Prior to the 2018 budget vote in parliament, for example, the Sweden Democrats called attention through the media to a few key aspects that the Moderates and the Christian Democrats would need to consider in their budget proposal in order to secure the SD’s support (*Omni*, 2019-06-30). Of course, there may also be secret negotiations in place – as in the case of New

Democracy in the 1990s – but such evidence is likely to surface only after a long time has passed (Nilsson, 2018).

This relates as well to the reasons offered by Liberal leader Jan Björklund against governing as a minority with active support from the Sweden Democrats: such a minority coalition will be ‘tempted’ to give in to the wishes of the radical right in order to secure its own survival. To prevent rival parties (or coalition partners) from yielding to such temptation, parties with a preference for isolating the radical right may attempt to reinforce reputational constraint. This dynamic need not be limited to inter-party competition; it may also apply to competing factions within the same party. A dominant Faction A, for example, might make a pre-commitment at t_0 with the intention of making it more costly for Faction B to act on its competing preferences at time t_1 , when relations of dominance may have been reversed. Whether and how dominant factions can impose such reputational constraint on rival factions should be a promising topic in the study of party strategy and intra-party politics.

Finally, it bears noting that this book has addressed changes in Swedish party competition which are still very much ongoing at the time of writing. The final chapter on the life cycle of the Swedish *cordon sanitaire* – the actual inclusion of the Sweden Democrats as a coalition partner or formal support party – is yet to be written. Based on the analyses in this book, I expect that Sweden will eventually conform to the European pattern of government cooperation between the mainstream right and the radical right. Predicting when this will happen, on the other hand, is a different matter, since it depends on a number of uncertain parameters. Will all parties currently in parliament win representation in the next election? Will the viability of the current arrangement for cross-bloc cooperation diminish as the parties are faced with implementing the more controversial parts of their policy agreement? How will Swedish party competition be affected by the external shock of the pandemic? These are questions that cannot yet be answered. However, when the time comes to analyse the next phase of Swedish mainstream party reactions to the radical right, I hope the findings in this book will prove useful.

Appendix

Table A.1. Variable overview

	N	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Policy range of government	870	2.58	1.66	0	7.84
SD seat share	870	0.056	0.053	0	0.24
Local party seat share	870	0.045	0.070	0	0.52
Number of parties in government	870	3.32	1.26	1	6
Number of parties represented	870	7.91	1.14	4	12
Ideological polarisation of system	870	2.72	0.93	0.33	5.86
Policy distance between the blocs	870	4.42	0.81	1.91	7.29
Cross-bloc coalition	870	0.30	0.46	0	1
SD controls balance of power	870	0.16	0.37	0	1
Right or left bloc formation initiative	856 ^a	0.50	0.50	0	1
Preceded by cross-bloc coalition	870	0.26	0.44	0	1
Either bloc holds a majority of seats	870	0.63	0.48	0	1

^a Formation initiative is undefinable in 14 cases where the blocs control an equal number of seats and no local parties are represented.

Table A.2. Pairwise correlation for the independent variables in Table 4.4

	SD seat share	Local party seat share	N parties in government	N parties represented	Ideological polarisation
SD seat share	1.0000				
Local party seat share	-0.1357	1.0000			
N parties in government	0.0629	0.0597	1.0000		
N parties represented	0.2286	0.1631	0.2831	1.0000	
Ideological polarisation	-0.0300	-0.2360	0.1373	0.1698	1.0000

Notes: N=827.

Table A.3. Alternative OLS model for Hypothesis 1, controlling for cross-bloc coalitions

	2006	2010	2014
SD's share of seats (%)	2.161 (2.862)	0.632 (1.934)	1.152 (1.395)
Local party's share of seats (%)	1.706* (0.875)	0.871 (1.036)	-0.412 (0.887)
Number of parties in government	0.505*** (0.0559)	0.380*** (0.0598)	0.406*** (0.0636)
Number of parties represented	-0.0252 (0.0718)	0.133** (0.0639)	0.0826 (0.0699)
Ideological polarisation of system	0.256*** (0.0680)	0.0869 (0.0806)	-0.0531 (0.0741)
Cross-bloc coalition (dummy)	1.675*** (0.182)	1.656*** (0.154)	2.116*** (0.160)
Constant	-0.192 (0.517)	-0.579 (0.472)	-0.102 (0.552)
Observations	272	271	284
R-Squared	0.405	0.483	0.572

Notes: Significant at * the 0.10 level, ** the 0.05 level, *** the 0.01 level. Dependent variable = Policy range of government. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Including all cases where no single party has a majority. Max VIF = 1.38.

APPENDIX

Table A.4. Full logit model for Hypothesis 2 (odds ratios)

	2006–2014	2006	2010	2014
SD controls balance of power (1) or not (0)	3.324*** (1.052)	1.046 (0.843)	5.161*** (3.199)	3.530*** (1.420)
Right bloc (1) or left bloc (0) holds formation initiative	0.828 (0.214)	0.481 (0.275)	1.119 (0.625)	0.936 (0.340)
Preceded by cross-bloc coalition (1) or not (0)	2.795*** (0.784)	2.820* (1.580)	1.340 (0.679)	4.935*** (2.127)
Number of parties represented	1.247 (0.188)	1.205 (0.357)	1.311 (0.372)	1.247 (0.249)
Policy distance between the blocs (0–10)	0.906 (0.144)	0.864 (0.307)	0.908 (0.381)	0.912 (0.223)
2006 (time dummy)	0.769 (0.306)			
2010 (time dummy)	0.859 (0.264)			
Constant	0.142 (0.197)	0.296 (0.752)	0.0725 (0.211)	0.108 (0.213)
Observations	309	70	81	158
Positive outcomes	162	27	41	94
SD controls balance of power	124	8	28	88
Pseudo-R2 (Nagelkerke)	0.185	0.120	0.138	0.239
C-statistic	0.720	0.699	0.670	0.753

Notes: Significant at * the 0.10 level, *** the 0.01 level. Dependent variable = Cross-bloc coalition (1) or not (0). Odds ratios with robust standard errors in parentheses (in the pooled sample clustered by municipality). Including all cases where no bloc holds a majority of the seats (except 14 cases where formation initiative is undefinable). Max VIF = 1.19.

Table A.5. Robustness checks for Hypothesis 2 (odds ratios)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
SD controls balance of power (1) or not (0)	3.301*** (1.037)	1.993** (0.558)	3.634*** (1.195)
Right bloc (1) or left bloc (0) holds formation initiative	0.709* (0.129)	1.048 (0.263)	0.636* (0.162)
Either bloc holds a majority of the seats (1) or not (0)	0.369*** (0.0768)		
Preceded by cross-bloc coalition (1) or not (0)	4.797*** (0.971)	1.794** (0.428)	3.169*** (0.946)
Number of parties represented	1.212** (0.111)	1.192 (0.166)	1.289 (0.203)
Policy distance between the blocs (0–10)	0.749*** (0.0839)	0.835 (0.130)	0.901 (0.153)
2006 (time dummy)	0.787 (0.189)	0.832 (0.324)	0.725 (0.281)
2010 (time dummy)	0.614** (0.137)	1.062 (0.331)	0.925 (0.303)
Constant	0.423 (0.350)	0.193 (0.234)	0.114 (0.161)
Observations	856	309	293
Positive outcomes	253	162	155
SD controls balance of power	124	124	120
Pseudo-R2 (Nagelkerke)	0.346	0.073	0.217
C-statistic	0.822	0.633	0.743

Notes: Significant at * the 0.10 level, ** the 0.05 level, *** the 0.01 level. Model 1 = Full sample and controlling for bloc majority; Model 2 = Dependent variable cross-bloc majority; Model 3 = Independent variable formation initiative excluding local parties. Odds ratios with standard errors clustered by municipality in parentheses.

Table A.6. Full multinomial logit model for Hypothesis 3 (relative risk ratios)

	2006	2010	2014
Left bloc cabinet	(base outcome)		
Right bloc cabinet			
SD controls balance of power (1) or not (0)	1.191 (2.371)	0.141* (0.165)	19.35*** (13.90)
Right bloc (1) or left bloc (0) holds formation initiative	609.7*** (442.5)	499.9*** (363.2)	193.4*** (105.1)
Either bloc holds a majority of the seats (1) or not (0)	1.176 (1.138)	0.840 (0.798)	3.904** (2.199)
Preceded by cross-bloc coalition (1) or not (0)	0.338* (0.199)	1.033 (0.666)	1.320 (0.907)
Number of parties represented	1.110 (0.262)	1.075 (0.225)	1.065 (0.235)
Policy distance between the blocs (0–10)	1.425 (0.380)	1.385 (0.468)	0.918 (0.308)
Constant	0.00444** (0.0119)	0.00616*** (0.0116)	0.0121** (0.0253)
Cross-bloc coalition			
SD controls balance of power (1) or not (0)	0.902 (1.685)	2.385 (2.343)	16.22*** (9.558)
Right bloc (1) controls more seats than the left (0)	8.213*** (5.021)	15.12*** (9.370)	11.79*** (5.402)
Either bloc holds a majority of the seats (1) or not (0)	0.252** (0.159)	0.319 (0.241)	1.184 (0.565)

(cont.)

Table A.6. (Continued)

	2006	2010	2014
Preceded by cross-bloc coalition (1) or not (0)	3.774*** (1.744)	3.576*** (1.738)	7.970*** (4.143)
Number of parties represented	1.067 (0.208)	1.601*** (0.275)	1.196 (0.224)
Policy distance between the blocs (0–10)	0.719 (0.165)	0.897 (0.266)	0.867 (0.237)
Constant	2.203 (4.263)	0.0136** (0.0237)	0.0824 (0.147)
Observations	287	285	284
Left bloc cabinet (n)	90	110	98
Right bloc cabinet (n)	135	109	64
SD controls balance of power	8	28	88
Pseudo-R2 (Nagelkerke)	0.719	0.735	0.626

Notes: Significant at * the 0.10 level, ** the 0.05 level, *** the 0.01 level. Relative risk ratios with robust standard errors in parentheses. Including all cases where no bloc holds a majority of the seats (except 14 cases where formation initiative is undefinable). Max VIF = 2.11.

Table A.7. Pathway ranking of cases

Year	Municipality	Composition	Pathway rank	Alternative rank	Combined rank
2010	Orsa	M, FP, S, MP	4	1	1
2010	Eslöv	M, S	3	2	2
2006	Karlskrona	M, C, FP, KD, MP	2	4	3
2010	Osby	C, KD, M, FP, MP, GP ^a	10	3	4
2014	Mellerud	S, C	7	6	5
2010	Hässleholm	M, C, FP, KD, MP, FV ^b	5	11	6
2014	Norrtälje	S, C, MP	9	9	7
2010	Sundbyberg	S, MP, C, KD	14	5	8
2014	Upplands-Bro	S, C, KD, MP	8	12	9
2014	Norrköping	S, C, FP, KD	13	8	10
2010	Tomelilla	M, S	6	18	11
2014	Håbo	M, C, FP, KD, MP	15	10	12
2014	Alvesta	S, C, MP	19	7	13
2006	Svalöv	M, S	1	26	14
2010	Kristianstad	M, C, FP, MP, ÅP ^c	11	16	15
2010	Tranås	M, C, FP, KD, MP	16	13	16
2010	Uppvidinge	M, C, FP, KD, MP	18	17	17
2014	Tibro	S, V, C, MP	12	28	18
2014	Laxå	M, C, FP, KD, MP	17	23	19
2010	Klippan	M, C, FP, KD, MP	20	20	20

Notes: Pathway ranking based on the pooled model in Table A.4. Alternative pathway ranking based on Model 1 in Table A.5. The combined ranking is ordered according to the sum of the other two rankings. When two cases have the same sum, the higher combined ranking is allocated to the case with the highest absolute ranking on either scale.

^a Göingepartiet (local party)

^b Folkets Väl (local party)

^c Åhuspartiet (local party)

Table A.8. Sources used for the study of Eslöv (chronological order)

Publication	Date	Title
Sveriges Radio Malmö	2006-09-18	“Socialdemokraterna vill fortsätta i Eslöv”
Sydsvenskan	2006-09-19	“Glädje över fortsatt rött styre”
Sydsvenska Dagbladet	2006-09-22	“Socialdemokraterna kan spräcka alliansen i Eslöv”
Sydsvenska Dagbladet	2006-09-22	“Socialdemokraterna flirtar med centern”
Sveriges Radio Malmö	2006-09-26	“Centern nobbar sossarna i Eslöv”
Sydsvenska Dagbladet	2006-09-26	“S i Eslöv fick nobben av C”
Sydsvenskan	2006-09-27	“Minoritetsstyre att vänta när s får nobben av C”
SVT Sydnytt	2006-10-03	“Minoritet ska styra i Eslöv”
Skånska Dagbladet	2008-05-14	“Extrapengar i S, V och MP:s budget”
Skånska Dagbladet	2009-10-23	“SD ställer sig bakom alliansens budget”
Norra Skåne	2009-11-06	“Moderaterna ringde och ville ha vårt stöd”
Skånska Dagbladet	2009-11-06	“Wöhlecke förnekar förhandlingar”
Norra Skåne	2009-11-07	“Wöhlecke: 'Inga fler samtal med SD'”
Norra Skåne	2009-11-09	“Lind (S) kräver Wöhleckes avgång”
Skånska Dagbladet	2009-12-27	“Turbulent år för politiker”
Dagens Samhälle	2010-09-02	“Bränd av kaoset när SD fick makt”
Skånska Dagbladet	2010-09-10	“Hon vill bli kommunalråd”
Sydsvenskan	2010-09-14	“Ovän kan bli vän i skånska stadshus”
Skånska Dagbladet	2010-09-18	“Hoppas på fyra nya år vid makten”
SVT Sydnytt	2010-09-19	“Blockpolitiken upplöst i kommunerna”
Skånska Dagbladet	2010-09-20	“Centerpartiet tappade stort”
Laholms Tidning	2010-09-20	“SD tredje största partiet i Eslöv”
SVT Sydnytt	2010-09-20	“Eslöv går inte att styra”
Skånska Dagbladet	2010-09-20	“Förlamning hotar”
Lokaltidningen Mellanskåne	2010-09-22	“S i Eslöv lämnar styret”
Lokaltidningen Mellanskåne	2010-09-22	“(S) söker samarbete över blockgränsen”
Skånska Dagbladet	2010-09-22	“Det skulle kännas konstigt”
Skånska Dagbladet	2010-09-22	“SD: 'Vi tror på ett samarbete'”
Sveriges Radio Malmö	2010-09-22	“Socialdemokrater i minoritet lämnar Eslövsstyret”
Skånska Dagbladet	2010-09-25	“Nästa vecka måste det hända något”
Skånska Dagbladet	2010-10-01	“Förhandlingar mellan blocken har strandat”
Lokaltidningen Mellanskåne	2010-10-01	“Politiska röran i Eslöv ökar”

(cont.)

Table A.8. (Continued)

Publication	Date	Title
Lokaltidningen Mellanskåne	2010-10-01	“Politiska röran i Eslöv ökar”
Norra Skåne	2010-10-01	“C raderas ut för sitt svek i nästa val”
Sveriges Radio Malmö	2010-10-03	“C positiva till S-samarbete”
SVT Sydnytt	2010-10-05	“Vem ska styra Eslöv”
Skånska Dagbladet	2010-10-08	“Forna allianskamrater: Enda lösningen”
Skånska Dagbladet	2010-10-08	“Strid väntar om oppositionsrådsposten”
Sydsvenskan	2010-10-08	“Blåröd kärlek spirar i Eslöv”
Sveriges Radio Kristianstad	2010-10-08	“S och M ordnar majoritet”
Skånska Dagbladet	2010-10-18	“S och M klara med maktfördelningen”
Skånska Dagbladet	2010-10-21	“Oppositionen mister nyckelpost”
Skånska Dagbladet	2010-10-21	“Moderaterna tar över i tre nämnder”
Skånska Dagbladet	2010-11-02	“Oppositionspartier maximerar inflytande”
Skånska Dagbladet	2011-02-28	“Första prövningen för S+M-samarbete”
Skånska Dagbladet	2011-10-03	“Politiskt äktenskap som håller”
Skånska Dagbladet	2011-10-06	“FP tror inte på ny allians i valet 2014”
Skånska Dagbladet	2012-02-19	“Första sprickan i S och M-samarbetet”
Skånska Dagbladet	2013-01-05	“Cecilia Lind är inne på slutvarvet”
Skånska Dagbladet	2013-10-08	“Moderaterna till val utan alliansen 2014”
Skånska Dagbladet	2013-10-23	“C går till val på egen hand”
Skånska Dagbladet	2014-08-21	“Inget S-besked om fortsatt samarbete”
Skånska Dagbladet	2014-08-27	“Fyra år vid makten gav mersmak för Wöhlecke”
Skånska Dagbladet	2014-09-01	“Inga konkreta löften i M:s valmanifest”
Skånska Dagbladet	2014-09-14	“SD nu näst störst i Eslöv”
Skånska Dagbladet	2014-09-15	“Moderaterna valets stora förlorare i Eslöv”
Skånska Dagbladet	2014-09-16	“Öppet för fortsatt samarbete”
Skånska Dagbladet	2014-09-20	“Melinder: Avbryt samarbetet med S”
Skånska Dagbladet	2014-10-02	“Moderaterna ’vill ingå i majoriteten”
Skånska Dagbladet	2014-10-10	“S och M skjuter på skattehöjningen”
Skånska Dagbladet	2014-10-10	“SD rasar: ’Ett hån mot demokratin”
SVT Nyheter	2014-10-19	“Här isoleras SD men växer ändå”
Aftonbladet	2014-11-29	“De ska ta M tillbaka till makten”
Dagens Nyheter	2015-01-27	“Budgethaveri blev start för blårött styre”

Table A.9. Sources used for the study of Gävle (chronological order)

Publication	Date	Title
Gefle Dagblad	2014-09-13	“Risk för styrkaos i Gävle”
Arbetsblad	2014-09-15	“Gävles politiska karta ritas om”
Sveriges Radio Gävleborg	2014-09-15	“Sverigedemokraterna blir vågmästare i Gävle”
Arbetsblad	2014-09-15	“Så ska SD stängas ute från makten”
Gefle Dagblad	2014-09-16	“Alliansen hoppas på ökat inflytande”
SVT Gävledala	2014-09-16	“Hur ska Gävle styras?”
Gefle Dagblad	2014-09-17	“Så röstar SD i Gävle”
Arbetsblad	2014-10-09	“Alliansen vill styra Gävle”
Arbetsblad	2014-10-09	“S-besvikelse över alliansens besked”
Gefle Dagblad	2014-10-10	“Så vill alliansen ta över makten i Gävle”
Gefle Dagblad	2014-10-10	“Här är alliansens krav i förhandlingarna”
SVT Gävledala	2014-10-10	“Förhandlingar om makten i Gävle”
Arbetsblad	2014-10-10	“Fortsatt förvirrat politiskt läge i Gävle”
Gefle Dagblad	2014-10-31	“Maktfrågan är ännu olöst”
Gefle Dagblad	2014-11-07	“Förhandlingarna om makten har brutit samman”
Sveriges Radio Gävleborg	2014-11-07	“Patrik Stenvar (M): Förhandlingarna har strandat”
Gefle Dagblad	2014-11-08	“Läget låst - nu får SD inflytande”
Sveriges Radio Gävleborg	2014-11-28	“Rödgrön budget i Gävle”
Sveriges Radio Gävleborg	2014-12-12	“De rödgröna styr i Gävle”
Arbetsblad	2015-03-29	“Alliansen vill ha mer av kakan”
Arbetsblad	2015-11-23	“I dag avgörs budgetstriden i Gävle”
Gefle Dagblad	2015-11-23	“SD faller de röd-grönas budget”
Arbetsblad	2015-11-24	“Alliansen i Gävle: Vi kommer inte att samarbeta med Sverigedemokraterna”
Dagens Samhälle	2015-11-26	“SD fällde Gävles rödgröna”
Arbetsblad	2015-12-02	“Politiska kaoset i Gävle - Alliansen vill styra i minoritet”
Gefle Dagblad	2015-12-03	“Kan historiskt maktskifte vitalisera Gävle kommun?”
Dagens industri	2015-12-27	“M tar över i Gävle - med stöd av SD”
Göteborgs-Tidningen	2015-12-29	“SD-hjälpen ger Moderaterna makten i Gävle”
Svenska Dagbladet	2015-12-29	“SD i Gävle: M har närmat sig oss”
Expressen	2015-12-29	“M förnekar samarbete med SD: 'Finns inte'”

(cont.)

Table A.9. (Continued)

Publication	Date	Title
Göteborgs-Tidningen	2015-12-30	“M förnekar SD-samarbete och avfärdar ’testballong’”
Dagens Samhälle	2016-01-14	“SD är inget stödparti till Alliansen i Gävle”
Dagens Nyheter	2016-09-01	“M regerar inte med stöd av SD i Gävle”
Flamman	2016-09-22	“Alliansen prövar SD:s lojalitet”
Dagens Nyheter	2016-09-24	“I Gävle sätts styre med stöd av SD på prov”
Dagens Samhälle	2016-10-06	“SD är ett onödigt parti”
Gefle Dagblad	2016-10-12	“Det har aldrig varit aktuellt med att samarbeta med SD”
Svenska Dagbladet	2016-10-30	“SD: Alliansen i Gävle måste ta oss på allvar”
Expressen	2016-11-24	“SD ger aldrig sitt stöd helt gratis”
Gefle Dagblad	2017-01-22	“Inger Källgren Sawela, låt oss träffas och diskutera kommunens utmaningar”
Arbetsbladet	2017-06-12	“Gävle-modellen ställs på sin yttersta spets”
Dagens ETC	2017-06-17	“SD försöker skapa kaos”
Arbetsbladet	2017-06-17	“SD:s ultimatum - fäller Alliansen om inte...”
Gefle Dagblad	2017-06-22	“Låt oss undvika politiskt kaos”
Gefle Dagblad	2017-08-19	“Källgren Sawela talar ut om bråket och när hon tänker avgå”
Gefle Dagblad	2018-09-10	“Valförlusten splittrar Gävles alliansstyre”
Gefle Dagblad	2018-10-30	“Nu är det klart - de ska styra Gävle kommun”

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Table A.10. Multinomial logit model for effect of opposition to immigration on vote choice, 2014 (relative risk ratios)

	V	MP	S	C	L	M	KD	SD
Opposition to immigration (0-10)	0.801*** (0.0609)	0.755*** (0.0516)	(ref.)	0.907 (0.0665)	0.887 (0.0646)	0.984 (0.0506)	1.138 (0.106)	2.351*** (0.230)
Age of respondent	0.973*** (0.00808)	0.975*** (0.00668)		1.013 (0.00845)	1.019** (0.00763)	1.013** (0.00521)	1.012 (0.00933)	0.991 (0.0104)
Household's total net income (deciles)	0.957 (0.0407)	0.970 (0.0382)		1.065 (0.0515)	1.051 (0.0525)	1.118*** (0.0372)	1.038 (0.0546)	1.022 (0.0663)
Years of full-time education completed	1.046 (0.0598)	1.224*** (0.0465)		1.047 (0.0423)	1.253*** (0.0474)	1.057* (0.0312)	1.235*** (0.0608)	1.067 (0.0683)
Gender (male=0; female=1)	0.826 (0.235)	1.073 (0.243)		1.391 (0.361)	1.235 (0.300)	0.960 (0.159)	1.488 (0.458)	0.884 (0.318)
Government should reduce differences in income levels	0.332*** (0.0755)	1.130 (0.171)		2.007*** (0.337)	3.057*** (0.473)	3.174*** (0.363)	2.812*** (0.530)	1.787** (0.426)
Constant	10.12** (11.61)	0.133** (0.113)		0.00838*** (0.0101)	0.000291*** (0.000322)	0.00918*** (0.00637)	0.000128*** (0.000177)	0.000525*** (0.000751)
Observations	80	127	396	83	106	347	59	65

Notes: Significant at * the 0.10 level, ** the 0.05 level, *** the 0.01 level. Relative risk ratios with robust standard errors in parentheses. N=1263. Nagelkerke's Pseudo-R2 = 0.408. Max VIF = 1.42.

APPENDIX

Table A.11. Party positions and difference between weighted and general L-R

Election	Party	Immigration	Economic L-R	GAL-TAN	General L-R	Weighted L-R	Diff. ^a
2010	V	1.4	1.2	3.1	1.4	2.1	0.7
2010	S	3.4	3.4	4.2	3.3	3.7	0.4
2010	MP	1.6	3.6	2.8	3.5	3.2	0.3
2010	C	4.5	7.3	5.0	7.0	6.3	0.7
2010	L	4.7	7.6	3.7	7.1	5.8	1.2
2010	KD	4.6	7.1	7.0	7.1	7.0	0.0
2010	M	5.4	7.5	5.2	7.3	6.7	0.6
2010	SD	9.8	5.5	8.3	8.4	7.5	0.9
2014	V	0.6	1.4	2.0	1.7	1.6	0.1
2014	MP	0.6	3.5	1.6	3.3	2.4	0.9
2014	S	2.3	3.4	3.6	3.8	3.5	0.3
2014	L	2.2	7.5	3.1	7.0	5.6	1.5
2014	C	1.9	7.7	3.0	7.2	5.7	1.6
2014	M	2.6	7.7	4.7	7.4	6.6	0.8
2014	KD	2.6	7.2	7.0	7.5	7.1	0.4
2014	SD	9.8	5.4	9.2	7.8	8.1	0.4
2017	V	1.8	1.2	1.9	1.6	1.5	0.0
2017	MP	2.6	3.6	1.6	3.1	2.3	0.8
2017	S	6.7	3.5	4.4	3.9	3.9	0.0
2017	C	3.3	7.9	2.2	6.9	4.8	2.0
2017	L	5.9	7.1	3.2	6.6	5.2	1.3
2017	M	7.6	8.4	5.9	7.9	7.3	0.7
2017	KD	7.6	7.6	7.1	7.8	7.3	0.5
2017	SD	9.9	5.9	8.9	8.0	8.1	0.1

Source: The 2010, 2014 and 2017 Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017).

^a Absolute difference between weighted and general left-right position.

Table A.12. Minimal connected coalition predictions 2010–2018 (general left-right)

	Majority	Plurality	Actual cabinet
2010 (seats)	V+S+MP+C (179)		
	S+MP+C+L (184)		
	C+L+KD+M+SD (193)	C+L+KD+M (173)	C+L+M+KD (173)
	MP+C+L+KD+M (198)		
2014 (seats)	V+MP+S+L (178)		
	MP+S+L+C (179)		
	L+C+M+KD+SD (190)	S+L+C (154)	V+MP+S (159)
	S+L+C+M (238)		
2018 (seats)	C+KD+M+SD (185)		
	MP+S+L+C+KD (189)	MP+S+L+C (167)	
	V+MP+S+L+C (195)	S+L+C+KD (173)	MP+S+L+C (167)
	S+L+C+KD+M (243)		

Notes: Cabinet compositions including support parties, sorted in descending order by number of seats. Parties ordered from left to right on the general left-right scale based on CHES 2010, 2014 and 2017. No results based on the weighted left-right dimension are shown here, since the theory's reliance on ordinal rankings means that there are no meaningful differences between a general and a weighted left-right dimension.

Table A.13. Average Euclidean distance between parties in predicted coalitions

	Position estimate	Majority	Plurality	Actual cabinet
2010		L+C+M+KD+SD	L+C+M+KD	L+C+M+KD
	Mean	2.5	1.7	1.7
	Median	3.2	2.7	2.7
	Mode	4.1	3.8	3.8
2014		L+C+M+KD+SD	S+L+C	V+MP+S
	Mean	3.4	2.9	2.3
	Median	3.4	2.7	2.8
	Mode	3.3	3.0	2.8
2018		C+M+KD+SD	MP+S+C+L	MP+S+C+L
	Mean	3.7	3.5	3.5
	Median	4.3	3.7	3.7
	Mode	5.0	3.7	3.7

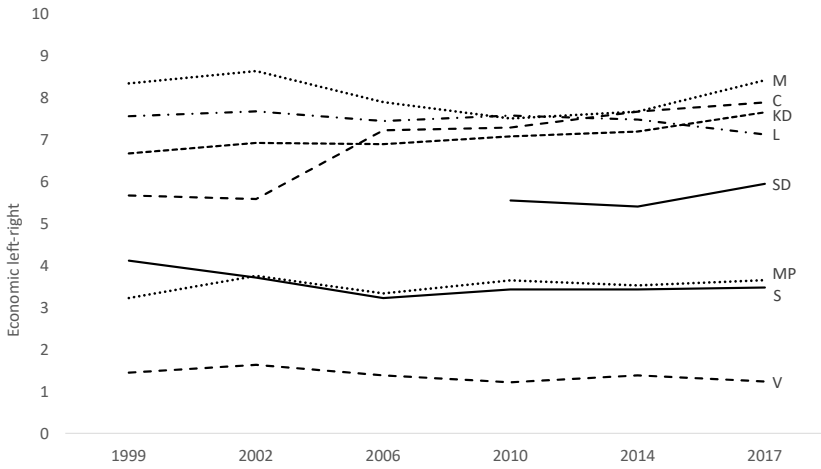
Notes: Coalitions predicted by the minimal range theory on the weighted left-right dimension. Parties ordered from left to right on the weighted left-right scale based on CHES 2010, 2014 and 2017. Figures refer to average Euclidian distances between the parties included in each coalition in a two-dimensional (economic/GAL-TAN) space based on mean, median or mode expert estimates.

Table A.14. Weighted dimension robustness checks

	Position estimate	Majority	Plurality	Actual cabinet
2010		L+C+M+KD+SD	L+C+M+KD	L+C+M+KD
	Mean	1.6	1.2	1.2
	Median	2.6	1.8	1.8
	Mode	3.3	2.6	2.6
2014		L+C+M+KD+SD	S+L+C	V+MP+S
	Mean	2.6	2.2	1.9
	Median	2.4	2.3	1.9
	Mode	2.6	2.5	2.2
2018		C+M+KD+SD	MP+S+C+L	MP+S+C+L
	Mean	3.2	2.9	2.9
	Median	4.0	3.3	3.3
	Mode	4.5	2.6	2.6

Notes: Coalitions predicted by the minimal range theory on the weighted left-right dimension. Parties ordered from left to right on the weighted left-right scale based on CHES 2010, 2014 and 2017. Figures refer to the ideological range of the coalitions, computed in three different ways.

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Source: The 1999–2017 Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017).
Notes: Party positions on the GAL-TAN dimension, ranging from libertarian/post-materialist (0) to traditional/ authoritarian (10).

Figure A.1. Economic left-right positions of Swedish parties (1999–2017)

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Why are some radical right parties included in government coalitions, while others are isolated from political cooperation through a *cordon sanitaire*? This book addresses this question through a study of how mainstream parties in Sweden have responded to the challenge of a radical right party: the Sweden Democrats. Sweden has been a puzzling case both in a comparative European perspective and in light of established theories of party competition. Rather than co-opting the restrictive immigration policies of the Sweden Democrats, the Swedish mainstream parties jointly converged on liberal policies. Despite their influential position in parliament, moreover, the Sweden Democrats have been systematically excluded from government formation.

This book argues that we need not invoke the idea of qualitatively different ‘pariah’ parties in order to make sense of such isolation of the radical right. Instead, it can be explained in terms of the strategic incentives of rival parties engaged in the pursuit of policy, office, and votes. To make this argument, the book highlights how a party’s strategic choices are constrained, between different levels of the party and over time. It also proposes theoretical and conceptual refinements that travel beyond the Swedish setting. The findings show that the transition from isolation to cooperation with the radical right can, under certain conditions, be a rapid process, and they challenge the perception of Sweden as a deviant case.

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